

LETTERS

Between the Late

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Mr. GILBERT BURNET,

AND

Mr. HUTCHINSON,

CONCERNING

The true Foundation of VIRTUE OR
MORAL GOODNESS.

Formerly published in the LONDON JOURNAL.

To which is added,

A PREFACE and a POSTSCRIPT,

Wrote by

Mr. BURNET some time before his Death.

*Ita fiet, ut Animi Virtus Corporis Virtuti anteponatur; Animique
Virtutes non voluntarias vincant Virtutes voluntariæ; quæ quidem
proprie Virtutes appellantur, multumque excellunt, propterea quod
ex Ratione gignuntur, qua nihil est in Homine divinius.*

*In Homine autem summa omnis Animi est; & in Animo Rationis;
ex qua Virtus est, quæ Rationis Absolutio definitur; quam etiam
atque etiam explicandam putant.*

Cicero de Fin. Bon. & Mal.

L O N D O N :

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PREFACE.

THE Occasion of this small Controversy was owing to a very ingenious Book, entitled, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue.*

In the Inquiry into Virtue, I apprehended that the beautiful Structure the Author had raised, wanted a sufficient Foundation: And, tho' the Conclusions were generally True and Right in themselves, and were capable of Demonstrative Proof, yet he seemed to me to have left them unsupported.

As I was unwilling that so many excellent Truths, and such a worthy Conduct of Life as the ingenious Author recommends to us, should remain under the Accusation of being but slightly grounded; I took the Liberty to represent the Defect of his Reasoning, and

the Needfulness of a further and deeper Search into the very Bottom of Virtue, in order to discover the true and solid Foundation of it.

Such a firm Foundation has been laid down by several very great Men who have writ on this Subject : In particular, by the Learned Bishop CUMBERLAND, in his Disquisitio Philosophica de Legibus Naturæ; after him by the Rev. Dr. CLARKE, in the Beginning of his Second BOYLE'S Lectures; and lately, by the excellent Author of the Religion of Nature Delineated.

These are the Principles maintain'd in the following Papers, subscribed PHILARETUS. And they all amount to this one Proposition, " That Virtue, or Moral Goodness, is founded on Truth."

As this Debate is now closed, I make bold to offer it again, in one View, to the World; hoping that, with all its Defects, it may not be wholly useless, nor unacceptable, to those Persons who desire always to know, for what Reason they ought to perform any Action or Office of Life.

I thought it the fairest way to publish my own, and my Correspondent's Letters together, in the Order in which they were writ, that the Reader might have the Opportunity of examining more easily, whether I have mistaken or misrepresented him, or not.

It is with no small Comfort that I look back, and observe, that in this Contro-

the Rules of Candor and Good Manners have not been transgressed, thro' an impatient Zeal for our respective Sentiments : A Conduct, which certainly nothing can excuse, either in writing or conversing on any Subject ; but much less, where the most important Truths are concerned. For it is not the way to promote any Truth ; and, in the present Case, would have been inconsistent with the Truths we were both defending, tho' in different Methods. And, sure, any one, who is capable of feeling the least Ardor for the Discovery of Truth, must be much above the low Pleasure of triumphing at the Expence of it.

I should not have said this, if I had not thought it an Acknowledgment due to my Correspondent ; and were not conscious to my self of endeavouring to keep close to the Example he shew'd me.

I have added a Postscript concerning the several Meanings of the Word Good ; which I hope will not be thought superfluous ; since it is pretty evident, that most of the Mistakes, in Moral Science, are in a good Measure owing to the unwary Use of Words ; by which well-meaning Men are often led insensibly, and undesignedly, to drop into their Conclusions a Sense which never subsisted in their Premises.

I am apt to think, that the ingenious Author of the Inquiry, &c. if he had thoroughly searched into the different Acceptations of the Words Good and Evil, and in what manner they were all derived from the primary and

proper Sense; would not have rested satisfied with the bare Description of Moral Good and Evil, by the Effects the Apprehension of them work in us, to excite internal Pleasure or Pain, or, which amounts to the same, Love or Aversion; nor have doubted whether we had really such Ideas; and whether there was any general Foundation in Nature for the Difference of Actions, as morally Good or Evil, as he does, P. III, 112.

His Description will only hold as to Relative Good and Evil. It is very true, that what affords us Pleasure is Good, relatively to us; and what brings us Pain is Evil to us. But still, what is Good to us may be, notwithstanding its being Relatively Good to us, very Evil in itself, as well as Relatively Evil to others: As, if one Creature were to be made happy by means of the undeserved Misery of all other Creatures. Happiness, in that case, would be Good relatively to that one Creature; but would be Relatively Evil to all other Creatures; and, because undeserved, would be Evil in itself. And the Author of such a supposed Constitution of Things, as should render one Creature happy at the Expence of universal Misery, could never be denominated Good, in the proper Sense; tho' still he would be Relatively Good to that single Creature.

In the divine Mind the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil must be immutably fixed. If those Words only mean what he approves and loves,

or is averſe to, and diſlikes, *they are uſeleſs and ſupernumerary Words, and ſhould not needleſſy be introduced into Philoſophical Diſcourſe.* If, when you affirm, that God is Good, you only mean, that he approves and likes ſomething, you know not why; you ſeem to ſay ſome great Thing of him, but in reality ſay nothing that implies any Moral Perfection. For ought we know, upon the Suppoſition, that we know not why he approves any Thing, he may approve to-morrow juſt the contrary of what he approves to-day. Will then Moral Good and Evil, in that caſe, change Places; and, what is morally Good to-day be morally Evil to-morrow? To be ſure it muſt, if Moral Good means only what he approves, and Moral Evil, what he diſapproves. But, if this be too abſurd to be maintained, it remains, that Moral Good and Evil have an immutable Foundation in the Nature of Things; as immutable as the Truths of Geometry have, which even the divine Mind cannot be conceived to alter. It follows, that Things are not morally Good, becauſe God approves them, nor morally Evil, becauſe he diſapproves them: But he is immutably Good himſelf, in the Moral Senſe of the Word; becauſe he always, and unchangeably, approves what is in itſelf Good, and diſapproves what is in itſelf Evil, and always acts conformably.

And, if the Intelligence of Men is capacious enough to attain the Knowledge of the Exiſtence, the Ground of the Exiſtence, the Modes

of

of it, and the Attributes of the Supreme Being; how can it be conceived, that they should come short of the Capacity of knowing the Differences of Things that come within their Reach, and their Relations to one another, and to their common Author, and the immutable Results of such Differences and Relations, once supposed to exist, which seem to lie much more within the Sphere of their Intelligence than those higher Truths; especially, if we take into the Consideration, how far Men are advanced in the Knowledge of the more abstruse and remote Truths of Geometry and Arithmetick, and Natural Philosophy?

But I shall not pursue this Subject farther at present. I am only here giving a Sketch of those Principles of Morality, which very able Men before me have maintained; and which I should scarce have presumed to trace after them in Publick, if the present Occasion had not called for it. How I have acquitted my self of my Undertaking, I must leave to the Judgment of my Reader, if any one shall think it worth his while to peruse these Papers.

LETTERS

Between the Late

Mr. GILBERT BURNET,

AND

Mr. HUTCHINSON, &c.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,



THINK that No *Attempt* to recommend *Virtue* to the World, and especially to the *Highest* Part of it, upon whose Example and Influence so much of the Virtue of the *Lower Rank* of Men depends, when this *Attempt* is prosecuted in an agreeable engaging Manner, should pass without the Regard and Notice due to it. This makes Me beg leave to mention to You, and (if You please) to the World, a *New Treatise*, intituled, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. The great View of the Book is best express'd in the *Author's*

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thor's own Words, *Pref.* p. vi. where He tells
 us — “ His principal Design is to shew, That
 “ *Human Nature* was not left quite indiffe-
 “ rent in the Affair of *Virtue*, to form to it-
 “ self Observations concerning the *Advantage*
 “ or *Disadvantage* of Actions, and accord-
 “ ingly to regulate its Conduct.” — After
 having observ'd from the unavoidable Circum-
 stances of Human Nature, that “ Few of Man-
 “ kind could have form'd those long Deducti-
 “ ons of *Reason*, which may shew some Actions
 “ to be in the whole *Advantageous* to the A-
 “ gent, and their contrary *Pernicious* ;” He
 adds, “ The AUTHOR of *Nature* has much
 “ better furnished us for a *virtuous Conduct*,
 “ than our *Moralists* seem to imagine, by al-
 “ most as quick and powerful Instructions, as
 “ We have for the Preservation of our Bodies.
 “ — He has made *Virtue* a *Lovely Form*, to
 “ excite our Pursuit of it ; and has given us
 “ *strong Affections* to be the Springs of each
 “ virtuous Action.” The *Writer* would wil-
 lingly raise in Mankind “ a *Relish* for a *Beau-*
 “ *ty* in *Characters*, in *Manners*,” as well as
 in other Things. And this He concludes with
 a *Reflection*, which I own was what moved
 Me to look into the Book, and to give You
 the present Trouble. “ I doubt, (*says He*),
 “ We have made *Philosophy*, as well as *Re-*
 “ *ligion*, by our foolish Management of it, so
 “ austere and ungainly a Form, that a Gen-
 “ tleman cannot easily bring Himself to like
 “ it ; and Those who are Strangers to it, can
 “ scarcely

“ scarcely bear our Description of it : So much
 “ is it changed from what was once the De-
 “ light of the *Finest Gentlemen* among the *An-*
 “ *tients* ; and their *Recreation*, after the Hur-
 “ ry of Publick Affairs !” One would hope,
 such a *Reproof* as This, may not fall to the
 Ground without Use ; not only as it is levell’d
 at some *Writers of Morals*, but as it ends with
 a *Satire* upon the *Indolence* and *Unconcern* a-
 bout a *Matter* of the greatest Importance, too
 visible in that Part of the World, who have so
 much *Leisure* that their *Time* is a Burthen to
 them ; and who yet waste so much of it in
 the Pursuit of the most Unmanly Relishes, that
 hardly a Moment is left for the supreme Relish
 of *Human Nature* in its most exalted State. If
 I could excite their Curiosity, to enter into
 such *Subjects* ; whether They found entire Sa-
 tisfaction in the *Scheme* of this *Author*, or not ;
 yet They would find a noble Entertainment
 for an Inquisitive Mind, mixed with a very a-
 greeable and uncommon Delicacy of Thought ;
 which must at length lead them to what will
 be the *Ornament* as well as Happiness of their
 Lives.

I SHALL only point out *One Part* of the
Book, which may give an *Idea* of the *Whole* ;
 and that is, the *Second Section* of the *Second*
Treatise, p. 125. *Concerning the Immediate*
Motive to virtuous Actions. Here the *Author’s*
 main and favourite Notions may appear from
 the following Propositions. “ 1. Every Action,
 “ which we apprehend as either *morally good*

“ or *evil*, is always supposed to flow from
 “ *some Affection* toward *rational Agents*; and
 “ whatever we call *Virtue* or *Vice*, is either
 “ some such *Affection*, or some *Action* conse-
 “ quent upon it. Or it may perhaps be enough
 “ to make an *Action*, or *Omission*, appear *vi-*
 “ *tious*, if it argues the Want of such *Affec-*
 “ *tion* toward *rational Agents*, as we expect
 “ in *Characters* counted *morally good*. 2.—
 “ None of these *Affections* which we call *Vir-*
 “ *tuous*, do spring from *Self-love*, or *Desire* of
 “ *private Interest*; since all *Virtue*, is either
 “ some such *Affections*, or *Actions* consequent
 “ upon them; from whence it necessarily
 “ follows, That *Virtue* is not pursu'd from
 “ the *Interest* or *Self-love* of the *Pursuer*, or
 “ any *Motives* of his own *Advantage*.” For
 the Proof of this, He instances in the Two
Affections, which are of most Importance in
Morals, LOVE and HATRED. As to the
Love, call'd the *Love* of *Complacence*, or *E-*
steem; This, He says, appears at first View
disinterested, and so its contrary; i. e. *entire-*
ly excited by some Moral Qualities, Good or
Evil, *apprehended to be in the Objects*, &c.
 “ As to the *Love* of *Benevolence*, [He goes
 on in a Manner worth transcribing, p. 129.]
 “ the very Name excludes *Self Interest*. We
 “ never call that Man *Benevolent*, who is in
 “ fact useful to others, but at the same time
 “ only intends his *own Interest*, without any
 “ desire, of or delight in, the *Good* of *others*.
 “ If there be any *Benevolence* at all, it must
 “ be

“ be *disinterested*; for the most useful Action
 “ imaginable, loses all Appearance of *Benevo-*
 “ *lence*, as soon as we discern that it only
 “ flowed from *Self-love* or *Interest*. Thus,
 “ never were any human Actions more *advan-*
 “ *tageous*, than the Inventions of *Fire*, and
 “ *Iron*; but if these were casual, or if the *In-*
 “ *ventor* only intended his *own Interest* in
 “ them, there is nothing which can be call’d
 “ *Benevolent* in them. Wherever then *Benevo-*
 “ *lence* is suppos’d, there it is imagin’d *disin-*
 “ *terested*, and design’d for the *Good* of others.
 “ But it must be here observ’d, That as all
 “ Men have *Self-love*, as well as *Benevolence*,
 “ these two Principles may jointly excite a
 “ Man to the same Action; and then they are
 “ to be consider’d as two Forces impelling the
 “ the same Body to Motion; sometimes they
 “ conspire, sometimes are indifferent to each
 “ other, and sometimes are in some degree op-
 “ posite. Thus, if a Man have such strong
 “ *Benevolence*, as would have produc’d an Acti-
 “ on without any Views of *Self-Interest*: that
 “ such a Man has also in View *private Ad-*
 “ *vantage*, along with *publick Good*, as the Ef-
 “ fect of his Action, does no way diminish the
 “ *Benevolence* of the Action. When he would
 “ not have produc’d so much *publick Good*,
 “ had it not been for the Prospect of *Self-*
 “ *Interest*; then the Effect of *Self-Love* is to
 “ be deducted, and his *Benevolence* is propor-
 “ tion’d to the remainder of *Good*, which pure
 “ *Benevolence* would have produc’d. When a
 “ Man’s

“ Man’s *Benevolence* is hurtful to himself, then
 “ *Self-Love* is opposite to *Benevolence*, and
 “ the *Benevolence* is proportion’d to the Sum
 “ of the *Good* produc’d, and the Resistance of
 “ *Self-Love* surmounted by it. In most Cases
 “ it is impossible for Men to know how far
 “ their Fellows are influenc’d by the one or o-
 “ ther of these Principles; but yet the general
 “ Truth is sufficiently certain, That this is the
 “ Way in which the *Benevolence* of Actions
 “ is to be computed. If any enquire, Whence
 “ arises this *Love* of *Esteem*, or *Benevolence*,
 “ to good Men, or to Mankind in general; if
 “ not from some nice Views of *Self-Interest*?
 “ Or, how we can be mov’d to desire the Hap-
 “ piness of *others*, without any View to our
 “ *own*? It may be answer’d, That the *same*
 “ Cause which determines us to pursue Happi-
 “ ness for our selves, determines us both to
 “ *Esteem* and *Benevolence* on their proper Oc-
 “ casions; even the very *Frame* of our Na-
 “ ture, or a generous *Instinct*, which shall be
 “ afterwards explain’d.”

You see the *Author* does not exclude the
 Pursuit of *our own* Happiness; but is labour-
 ing to found *Virtue* upon something more *di-*
vine, and exalted, than *Self-love*. He then
 proceeds to “ other *Affections*, as *Fear*, or
 “ *Reverence*, arising from an Apprehension
 “ of *Goodness*, *Power* and *Justice*” — and
 then goes on to answer the principal Objections
 against his Notion. After which He concludes
 the Argument with an ingenious Thought about

the *Foundation* of what we call *National Love*, or the *Love of our Native Country*. “ What-
 “ ever Place, (*says He*, p. 147.) we have
 “ lived in for any considerable Time, there
 “ we have most distinctly remarked the *vari-*
 “ *ous Affections* of human Nature; we have
 “ known many *lovely Characters*; we remem-
 “ ber the *Associations, Friendships, Familys,*
 “ *natural Affections*, and other human *Senti-*
 “ *ments*. Our *moral Sense* determines us to
 “ approve these *lovely Dispositions* where we
 “ have most distinctly observ’d them: And our
 “ *Benevolence* concerns us in the Interests of
 “ the Persons possess’d of them. When we
 “ come to observe the like as distinctly in *ano-*
 “ *ther Country*, we begin to acquire a *natio-*
 “ *nal Love* towards it also; nor has our *own*
 “ Country any other Preference in our Idea,
 “ unless it be by an *Association* of the pleasant
 “ Ideas of our Youth, with the *Buildings,*
 “ *Fields, and Woods*, where we received them.
 “ This may let us see how *Tyranny, and Facti-*
 “ *on, a Neglect of Justice, a Corruption of Man-*
 “ *ners, and anything* which occasions the Mi-
 “ *serery of the Subjects*, destroys this *national*
 “ *Love, and the dear Idea of a COUNTRY.*”

I SHALL only add, that what He here calls
 our *Moral Sense*, He has before explained in
 the *former Part* of his Work: And shall con-
 clude with expressing my Hope, that This *Trea-*
tise, and Another in particular, which has lat-
 ly appeared with so great and just an Applause,
 may revive and excite in Men of Fortune and
 Leisure,

Leisure the Study of the Philosophy of *Virtue*, and the Nature of *True Religion*. This would soon throw a Lustre upon their whole Conduct. It would give *Decency* to every Part of their own *Behaviour*, and Happiness to their Country, and to all the World around them. I am,

S I R, Your, &c.

PHILOPATRIS.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,

IT was with great Pleasure that I read the *Letter* you lately published from PHILOPATRIS, relating to the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*; both because in it he recommends to the World a very *ingenious* Treatise; and because he professes, his Design and Hopes were *to excite the Curiosity* of Men of *Leisure* and *Inquisitiveness*, to *enter into such Subjects*; to *study the Philosophy of Virtue, and the Nature of true Religion*. And I am the more pleased with his *Design*; because I am much afraid, that, without some *Study and Cultivation*, the bare *moral Sense of Virtue*, which the Author of the *Inquiry* very justly observes to be implanted in Men, would continue lurking in their Breasts, without ever exerting it self in any *constant and regular Course* of useful and agreeable Products. With-

out

but this, it may indeed ferment, and annoy them, *within*: But it will never spring up sufficiently to have any *lasting* and *uniform* Influence on their Actions *without*. It may make them *sensible* when they are in the *wrong*: But it will scarce have Force enough to prevail upon them to keep themselves always in the *right*; unless they will afford some Time, and some Pains, to consider coolly of it; and suffer themselves to feel the Weight of the *Arguments* and *Reasons* for it.

AND, as nothing seems to me more likely to stir up the Attention of Mankind to this *Study*, than the hearing the different Opinions of Men on such Subjects, when they are delivered in a truly Philosophical Manner; and appear to proceed from a *real* Desire of *Truth*, without any Mixture of *Contention* and *Cavil*; I have taken the Liberty to send you my Thoughts on this Subject; leaving it wholly to your Judgment, whether they deserve to be conveyed into the World, or not.

I COULD not but be sensibly touch'd with the noble Design of the Author of the *Inquiry*, to deduce the *Excellency* and *Obligation* of *moral Actions* from one plain and simple Principle in Nature, which he calls a *Moral Sense*. And, allowing his *Principle*, his *Conclusions* are most justly and accurately drawn. But when I considered his *Principle* itself more closely, I could not find in it that *Certainty*, which *Principles* require. I saw indeed, there was some such thing in humane
C Nature:

Nature. But I was at a Loss to know how it came there; and whence it arose. I could not be sure, it was not a *deceitful* and *wrong Sense*. The *Pleasure* arising from the Perceptions it afforded, did not seem sufficient to convince me that it was *right*. For I knew that *Pleasure* was very apt in many Things to mislead us, and was always ready to tinge the Objects it was concerned in with false and glaring Colours. And I could not see any good Reason to trust it more in one Case, than in another. It appeared to me too uncertain a Bottom to venture out upon, in the stormy and tempestuous Sea of Passions and Interests and Affections.

I WANTED therefore some further *Test*, some more certain Rule, whereby I could judge whether my *Sense*, my *moral Sense* as the Author calls it, my *Taste* of Things, was *right*, and agreeable to the *Truth* of Things, or not. And till I obtained this Satisfaction, I could not rest contented with the bare *Pleasure* and *Delight* it gave me. Nay, indeed, without this, I could not indulge my self in this *Pleasure*, without a secret Uneasiness arising from my Suspicions of its not being *right*; and from a kind of constant Jealousy I entertain of every *Pleasure*, till I am once satisfied it is a *reasonable* one.

THE Preception of *Pleasure* therefore, which is the Description this Author has given of his *Moral Sense*, P. 106, seems to me not to be a certain enough Rule to follow. There

must

must be, I should think, something *antecedent* to justify it, and to render it a *real Good*. It must be a *Reasonable Pleasure*, before it be a *right* one, or *fit* to be encouraged, or listened to.

IF it be so, then it is the *Reason* of the thing, and not the *Pleasure* that accompanies it, which ought to conduct us: And the first Question must always be; “ Is the Action *Reasonable*? Is it *Fit*, that I should allow “ my self to accept of the *Pleasure* it promotes me?”

THE Constitution of all the Rational Agents that we know of is *such* indeed, that *Pleasure* is inseparably annexed to the Pursuit of what is *Reasonable*. And *Pleasure* ought never to be considered as something independent on *Reason*; no more than *Reason* ought to be reckon’d unproductive of *Pleasure*. But still the Ideas of *Reason* and *Right* are quite different from those of *Pleasure*. and must always in Reasoning be considered distinctly: *Reason* as the Ground of Inward *Pleasure*, and that *Pleasure* as the Encouragement to follow *Reason*.

REASON and *Pleasure* may both of them be properly enough stiled *Internal Senses*; and, with relation to *Moral Actions*, *Moral Senses*. But still they must be conceived as different *Senses*: *Reason*, as the *Sense* of the *Agreement* or *Disagreement* of our *Simple Ideas*, or of the *Combinations* of them, resulting from their Comparison: *Pleasure*, as the *Sense* of Joy which any *Ideas* afford us.

Now this *Internal* or *Moral* Sense, which we call *Reason*, is the *Rule* by which we judge, and the only *Rule* we can judge by, of *Truth* and *Falshood*; and, in *moral Actions*, of *moral Good* or *Evil*, of what is *Right* or *Wrong*, *Fit* or *Unfit*. And the other *Internal* or *Moral Sense* of *Pleasure* or *Pain*, whereby we conceive *Joy* in discerning *Truth*, or *Pain* in feeling ourselves embarras'd with *Falshood*; or, in *moral Actions*, by reflecting upon in ourselves, or observing in others, *Moral Good* or *Moral Evil*; is not it self the *Rule* by which we judge, or can judge, of *Truth* or *Falshood*, of *Moral Good* or *Evil*; but only the Consequence of finding that we judge *right*, and according to *Reason*. And this latter *Sense* indeed constitutes our *Idea* of *Beauty*; by which Word, I think, we mean no more than *what pleases us*.

BUT *Things* do not seem to us to be *True* or *Right*, because they are *beautiful*, or *please us*; but seem *beautiful*, or *please us*, because they seem to us to be *True* or *Right*. And always, in our Apprehensions of *Things*, (I mean, those *Apprehensions* of things, about which we are now concern'd,) the *Reason* of the thing, or the *Sense* of it's being *True* or *Right*, is antecedent to our *Sense* of *Beauty* in it, or of the *Pleasure* it affords us.

THUS, in a *Theorem*, or *Problem*, in *Geometry*, we perceive *Beauty*. But we first discern *Truth*; or we should never find out any *Beauty* in it. And so, in *Moral Science*, we

first conclude, that a certain Action is *Right*: And then it appears to us likewise *Beautiful*. But, while we are in any Suspence about it, and doubt whether it is in it self *Right* or *Wrong*; or if we know it to be *Wrong*; we can never feel any *Beauty* in it. I do not say, there is always a Distance of Time between these two *Sentiments*, viz. of *Truth* or *Right*, and *Beauty*. If there is, the *Perceptions* of our Mind are often in this Case too nimble for us to measure it. But I speak only of the *Order* in which we should consider *them*, and the *Dependence* they have on one another. And in this Sense, I say, *Beauty*, in the Nature of Things, follows, or depends upon, our previous Apprehension of *Truth*, or of *Right*.

It may be said indeed, by way of *Objection* to what I have advanced, " That the *Sense* " of *Beauty* or *Pleasure* moves faster than " the *Sense* of *Truth* or *Right* : That, in " particular, the *former* is immediate upon " many *Moral Actions* proposed to us; but " the *latter* does not operate but after a *long* " *Deduction of Reasoning*, which many are in- " capable of, who yet discern *Beauty*, and feel " *Pleasure* in such Actions." But the *Answer* is pretty easy: It is true, we often find *Beauty* and *Pleasure* in *Propositions* and *Actions*, where there is no *Truth* or *Right*. But then it must be, where we *imagine* we find *Truth* or *Right* in them. In this we may deceive our selves: But still that *Deception* is the Ground of our *Sense* of *Beauty* or *Pleasure*

in such a case, tho' it may be a *False* Ground. And if we know, or imagine, that there is an absence of *Truth* or *Right*, we shall never feel any such *Sense* of *Beauty* or *Pleasure* there. Sometimes, we perceive *Truth* or *Right*, by a kind of natural Penetration and Sagacity of the Mind, before we have staid to weigh distinctly every one of the Steps which lead to it. And then, taking the Conclusion for granted, we esteem it *Beautiful* or *Pleasant*.

THIS may happen to some in the abstruser Sciences, who have Heads perfectly well turned for them. Whenever a *Proposition* is named to them, if it be not of too complex a Nature, they shall immediately discern whether it is *True* or *False*, even before they go thro' every Step of the *Demonstration*. And, upon this Confidence in their own Penetration and Sagacity, they shall perceive *Beauty* or *Pleasure* in the *Proposition*. And, when they enquire further, if they find they judged *right*, it confirms them in that *Beauty* or *Pleasure* which they conceived from a more partial and slight View, and encreases it. If they find they judged *wrong*, the *Beauty* immediately vanishes away, and a Sentiment of the contrary succeeds. Few, indeed, are capable of such quick *Perceptions* in those kind of Sciences, where the Conclusions are forced to pass thro' many Steps. But almost all Mankind are capable of them in *Moral Science*, where the Conclusion and the Premises lie within a narrower Compass.

To instance in *Benevolence*. Every Man, of any Degree of Understanding, who has observed himself, and others, immediately with one Glance of Thought, perceives it *Reasonable* and *Fit*, " That the *Advantage of the Whole* should be regarded more than a *Private Advantage*, or the *Advantage of a Part* only of that *Whole*." And, taking this quick Conclusion for granted, even before he has examined every Step that conduces to it, he sees *Beauty* in every *Moral Action* by which the *Advantage of the Whole* is designed : Not because it is *Advantageous* or *Useful* to *Himself*, or even to the *Whole* ; but because he sees, or thinks he sees, it to be *Fit* and *Reasonable* that the *Advantage of the Whole* should take place. And the *Beauty* he apprehends in the *Action* seems to consist in this, " That it agrees, or " seems to agree, with what is in itself *Fit* and " *Reasonable*." And the more he considers the Proposition, *viz.* " That it is *Fit* and *Reasonable* that the *Advantage of the Whole* " should be preferred," and, by proving it, feels the *Truth* of it more strongly in his Mind ; the more he will be confirmed in esteeming *Benevolence* to be Beautiful, as a Disposition conducing to *That* which is *Fit* and *Reasonable* in itself ; and the same as to *Actions* proceeding from that *Disposition*. But, if it were possible a Mind could be so framed, as to feel the *contrary* to be *Truth* and *Right* ; no doubt, all the *Beauty* of *Benevolence*, or *Benevolent Actions*, would immediately vanish out

out of that Mind. And, I am afraid that Men may, by long endeavouring to deceive themselves into this false Opinion, bring themselves at last to believe it, or at least to imagine they do; and by that means destroy in themselves all *Sense of Beauty* in *Benevolence*, as well as work out by Degrees the *Disposition* itself which Nature has fixed so deeply in their Breasts. But I hope there are few such Monsters in Humane Nature; or, at least, that ever arrive at the highest Pitch of this Depravity.

I do not mean by what I have advanced to diminish the Force of the strong *Motives* to *Virtue*, arising from the *Beauty* or *Pleasure* which our *Natural Affections* make us perceive and feel in *morally Good* Actions. I know they are the most successful Solicitors to every thing that is *Right* and *Reasonable*, if duly attended to, and not mistaken, or misused. And we should be comfortless and forlorn Creatures, if we had no *Affections* and inward Warmth of Sentiments to spur us on to what Dry *Reason* approves of. But I would not have Men depend upon their *Affections* as *Rules* sufficient to conduct them, tho' they are the proper Means to animate them to, and support them in, such a Conduct as *Reason* directs. I would have them search still higher for the Foundation and Ground of those very *Motives*. And I am perswaded they will find that *Reason* is as necessary to account for them, and to justify their Effect; as it is needful to guide and direct them afterwards.

AND

AND I have no small *Pleasure* in observing, that all the accurate Deductions and Reasonings of the *Author* of the *Inquiry* may easily be adapted to the Principle here laid down; viz. *Reason*, or our *Internal Sense* of *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Moral Good* and *Evil*, *Right* and *Wrong*, accompanied, and fortified, by another succeeding *Internal Sense* of *Beauty* and *Pleasure*, feeling those things which are *Reasonable* and *True* to be at the same time *Delightful*: and, on the Reverse, of *Deformity* and *Pain*, terrifying us from following after *Falshood*, or giving our selves up to any thing that is *Unreasonable*.

But I find too many Thoughts on this Subject crowding into my Mind, to dispose them within the Compass of a *Letter*. And therefore, if it be acceptable, I shall take some further Opportunity of addressing myself to you: And, in the mean while, am

S I R, Yours, &c.

PHILARETUS.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,

I SEND you the following Thoughts upon the Subject of PHILARETUS's Letter of April 10, and shall study to imitate his gentlemanly and *truly philosophical* Manner of Writing on so useful a Subject.

D

THERE

THERE are certain *Words* frequently used in our Discourses of *Morality*, which, I fancy, when well examined, will lead us into the same Sentiments with those of the Author of the late *Inquiry into Beauty and Virtue*. The Words I mean are these, when we say that Actions are *Reasonable*, *Fit*, *Right*, *Just*, *Conformable to Truth*. *Reason* denotes either our Power of finding out *Truth*, or a Collection of Propositions already known to be *True*. *Truths* are either *Speculative*, as “*When we discover, by comparing our Ideas, the Relations of Quantities, or of any other Objects among themselves;*” or *Practical*, as “*When we discover what Objects are naturally apt to give any Person the highest Gratifications, or what Means are most effectual to obtain such Objects.*” *Speculative Truth* or *Reason* is not properly a *Rule* of Conduct, however *Rules* may be founded upon it. Let us enquire then into *Practical Reason*, both with relation to the *End* which we propose, and the *Means*.

TO a Being which acts only for its own *Happiness*, That *End* is *Reasonable*, which contains a greater *Happiness* than any other which it could pursue; and when such a Being satisfies itself with a smaller Good for itself, while a greater is in its Power, it pursues an *Unreasonable End*. A Being of this Temper, as to the *Means*, would call those *Reasonable*, which were effectual to obtain their *End* with the smallest Pain or Toil to the Agent; with such

a Being, the Cruelty of the *Means*, or their bad Influence on a *Community*, would never make them pass for *Unreasonable*, provided they had no bad Influence on his own Happiness.

BUT if there are any Beings, which by the very Frame of their Nature desire the Good of a *Community*, or which are determin'd by *kind Affections* to study the Good of others, and have withal a *Moral Sense*, which causes them necessarily to approve such Conduct in themselves or others, and count it amiable; and to dislike the contrary Conduct as hateful: To such Beings, That *End* is *Reasonable*, which contains the greatest Aggregate of *Publick Happiness*, which an Agent can procure; and the pursuing of the Good of a small *Party*, or *Faction*, with neglect of more *universal* Good, to *such Natures* would seem *Unreasonable*. If these Beings have also *Self-Love*, as well as Natural *Benevolence* and a *Moral Sense*, and at the same Time find that their own highest Happiness does necessarily arise from *Kind Affections* and *Benevolent Actions*, That *End* which would appear *Reasonable*, would be *Universal Happiness*, the very Pursuit of which, is supposed to be the greatest Happiness to the several Agents themselves; for thus both Desires are at once gratified, as far as they are capable of doing it by their own Actions. By such Beings as these, the *Means of Publick Good* will be counted *Unreasonable*, when they occasion

Evil to the Agent, greater than the Good obtained by them to the Publick; or when other *Means* equally in our Power might have obtained the same, or an equal Publick Good, with less Detriment, either to the Agent himself, or to other Persons: And, in like Manner, the *Means of Private Good* will be reputed *Unreasonable* by such Beings, when they contain a prepollent *Publick Evil*, or a *Greater Evil* towards others, than is contained in Means equally effectual for obtaining the same, or equal Private Good. Under this Class of Beings, the Author of the *Inquiry* seems to rank our own Species, Mankind.

IF any one should ask concerning *Publick* and *Private Good*, Which of the two is most *Reasonable*? The Answer would be various, according to the Dispositions of the Persons who are passing Judgment upon these *Ends*. A Being entirely *Selfish*, and without a *Moral Sense*, will judge that its own Pursuit of its greatest private Pleasure is most *Reasonable*. And as to the Actions of others, it can see, whether the Actions be naturally apt to attain the *Ends* proposed by the *Agents*, or whether their *Ends* interfere with its own *Ends*, or not; but it would never judge of them under any other Species than that of Advantage, or Disadvantage, and only be affected with them as we are now with a fruitful Shower, or a destructive Tempest. Such a Being might have the abstract *Idea of Publick Good*; but

would

would never perceive any Thing amiable in the Pursuit of it. The only Debate, which such a *Mind* could entertain concerning *Ends*, would be only this, Whether this *Object* or another, would conduce most to its own greatest Advantage or Pleasure.

BUT if the same Question be proposed to *Beings* who have a *moral Sense* of Excellence in publick Affections, and a Desire of publick Good implanted in their Nature; such Beings will answer, that it is *Reasonable* that smaller *Private* Good should yield to greater *Publick Good*, and they will disapprove of a contrary Conduct: But without this *Sense* and *Affections*, I cannot guess at any *Reason* which should make a Being approve of Publick Spirit in another, farther than it might be the Means of Private Good to it self.

IF one should still farther enquire, is there not something *absolutely Reasonable* to any possible *Mind* in *Benevolence*, or a Study of Publick Good? Is it not *absolutely Reasonable*, that a Being who does no Evil to others, should not be put to Pain by others? It is very probable every *Man* would say, that these Things are Reasonable. But then, all Mankind have this *Moral Sense* and *Publick Affections*. But if there were any *Natures disjoined from us*, who knew all the *Truths* which can be known, but had no *Moral Sense*, nor any Thing of a superior Kind equivalent to it; such *Natures* might know the Constitution of our Affairs, and what *Publick* and *Private Good* did mean; they

they would grant, that equal Intenfeness of Pleasure enjoyed by Twenty, was a greater Sum of Happinefs than if it were enjoyed only by One; but to them it would it be *indifferent*, whether One or more enjoyed Happinefs, if they had no benevolent Affections. Such *Natures* might fee from the Constitution of our Affairs, that a *social* Conduct would be the most probable Way for each fingle Perfon of Mankind to fecure his own Happinefs, in the Neighbourhood of a Set of Beings like themfelves, with focial Affections, and a Senfe of Honour and Virtue; but thefe *disjoined Natures*, without a *Moral Senfe*, would fee nothing *Reasonable* in the good Affections of one Man towards another, abftractly from Confiderations of the Advantage of the Virtue to the virtuous Agent: And if this *disjoined Nature* obferved fuch a Conjuncture, wherein a Man who had ftupified his *Moral Senfe*, fo as to be above Remorfe, could with Privacy, Force, or cunning Management, furnifh himfelf with the higheft Pleafures he then could relifh, at the Expence of Mifery to Multitudes; if this *disjoined Nature* had no Notion of a good Deity, and of a State of future Rewards or Punifhments, it would fee perhaps that the Conduct of this Man was not apt to promote the Publick Good, nor the *Reasonable* Means for that End: But it would alfo acknowledge that this was *Reasonable* Conduct in the Agent, in order to obtain private Happinefs to it felf. If there be any other Mean-

ing of this Word *Reasonable*, when apply'd to Actions, I should be glad to hear it well explained ; and to know for what *Reason*, besides a *Moral Sense* and *Publick Affections*, any Man approves the Study of Publick Good in others, or pursues it himself, antecedently to Motives of his own private Interest.

WHAT has been said of *Reasonable* and *Unreasonable*, may be also apply'd to that *Fitness* and *Unfitness of Things*, which some speak of in their Moral Writings. It is certain, that abstracting from the Observation or Relish and Approbation of any other *Mind*, some Objects are *apt* or *fit* to give greater Pleasures to the Person who enjoys them, than others : It is certain also, that some Means are more effectual to obtain an End than others. In this Sense, there is a natural *Fitness* and *Unfitness* both in Ends and Means. Thus one Tenour of Conduct is naturally more *fit* among Men to promote Publick Good, than another ; and to *Men*, who have a *Moral Sense* and *Publick Affections*, a *Benevolent* Conduct is more *fit* to promote the Happiness of the Agent than the Contrary ; more fit to engage the Favour of a good Deity, than a malicious Conduct : And any *Mind* whatsoever, who knew our State, and believed a good Deity, might perceive this *Fitness* in Benevolence to promote both Publick Happiness and that of the Agent, both in this Life and the next. But a *Mind* without a *Moral Sense*, altho' it saw this natural *Fitness* of Benevolence

to obtain these Ends, would never *approve* of Benevolence, unless this *observing Mind* had kind Affections toward Mankind, (so that the Happiness of Men were an End agreeable to this *Mind*;) or a *Moral Sense* did determine it to *admire* and *approve* a Publick Spirit wherever it observed it. Without a *Moral Sense*, a Mind would *approve* nothing but what was *Fit* for its own Ends, altho' it might also observe what was *Fit* to promote the Ends of others. That *absolute antecedent Fitness in the Nature of the Things themselves*, of which some talk, must either mean this *Sensation of Excellence* which we necessarily receive by our *Moral Sense*, or it is to me perfectly unintelligible, since it is supposed *antecedent to any Views of Private Interest, or any Sanctions of Laws*; and for *Publick Interests*, it must be a *Moral Sense*, or a *Benevolent Instinct*, which can make any Man regard them.

As to the Words *Just, Right*, and their Opposites *Unjust and Wrong*, antecedently to any Opinion of *Laws*, or *Views of Interest*, the same may be said of them which was said of the former Words, *Reasonable, Fit*, and *Unfit*; they seem to have no other Meaning, but *agreeable or disagreeable to a Moral Sense*.

As to another Character of Actions, *viz. Agreeable to Truth*, We know that by Custom, *Words or Sounds* are made Signs of *Ideas*, and *Combinations of Words* Signs of *Judgments*. We know that Men generally by *Words* express their *Sentiments*, and profess to

speaK,

of speak, as far as they know, according to what is Matter of Fact ; so that their Profession is to speak *Truth*. In like Manner we judge of Actions : We know what is the usual Conduct of Men upon certain Occasions, from the Dispositions which we generally imagine to be in Mankind, if they have the same Opinions of Objects which we have, and which Men generally profess to have : And hence we conclude, from a Man's acting otherwise, that he has either other *Opinions* of Objects, or other *Affections* than those which we have ourselves, and expect to find in other Men.

Thus a Man who kills another, who had done him no harm, by his Action *declares*, or *gives us Occasion* to conclude, either that he does not take that Object which he treats in this Manner to be a Man ; or if he knows what Object he acts upon (as we generally imagine he does on such Occasions) he *declares*, or *gives us Ground* to conclude, that he has not those *Affections*, or that *Moral Sense* of Actions, which we generally expect in Mankind. So that this *Disagreeableness to Truth* in such an Action, at last must end in a *Moral Sense*, unless the Person be *mad*, and really have false Appearances of Objects.

As to these Phrases, *treating Things as they are*, or *according to what they are*, or *are not*, they arise from our *Moral Sense*. This Sense suggests to us what Treatment of Objects is amiable, and what is odious. *Virtue*, or a *Regard to Publick Good*, in Confor-

mity to this *Sense*, is so universally professed by Mankind, and acknowledged to be the only Conduct which they can approve, that we say, Men do not act *suitably to the Nature of Things* who do not pursue Publick Good: But it is our *Moral Sense* of Excellence in a Publick Spirit, which suggests to us this Idea of *Suitableness* of Conduct to Natures; which *Suitableness* we involve in the Particles *as, according, and such like*. Had we our selves been *wholly selfish*, and lived in a System of Beings *wholly selfish*, without a *Moral Sense*, in which System we should have had no Ground to have expected any Regard to the Good of each other, in our Fellows; their doing Evil to each other, or procuring *private Pleasure* by the *Pains of Multitudes*, when they had *Force* to do it successfully, would have been *treating Things as they would have been upon this Supposition*; nor should we have perceived any *Opposition to Truth* in such Actions.

It were to be wished that Writers would guard against, as far as they can, involving very complex Ideas under some short *Words* and *Particles*, which almost escape Observation in Sentences; such as, *ought, should, as, according*; nay sometimes in our *English* Gerunds, *is to be done, is to be preferr'd*, and such like. Some Writers treat the Pronoun *his*, as if it were the Sign of a simple Idea; and yet involve under it the complex Ideas of *Property*, and of a Right to *natural Liberty*. As the School-men made *Space* and *Time* to vanish into Nothings,

Nothings, by hiding them in the Adverbs *when* and *where*, or by including them in the Compound Words *Coexistent*, *Corresponding*, &c.

As to PHILARETUS's Letter, he has not happen'd to observe the Author of the *Inquiry's* Definition of the *Moral Sense*, p. 124th ; and seems by this means to have misapprehended him in some Things.

As to his Questions, "*Whence this Sense arose?*" The Author of the *Inquiry* takes it to be implanted by the Author of Nature. PHILARETUS wants to be sure that this Sense is not Deceitful or Wrong. If by a *wrong* or *deceitful* Sense, he means a Sense which shall make *That* pleasant for the present, which shall have pernicious Consequences ; the Author of the *Inquiry* has attempted to prove, that the Pleasures of the *Moral Sense* are the most *lasting* and *solid* in human Life. And, as he does not profess to give a *complete Treatise* of *Morality*, he recommends to us CUMBERLAND and PUFFENDORF, who shew that *Benevolence* and a *social* Conduct is the most probable way to secure to each Individual, Happiness in this Life, and the Favour of the Deity in any future State to be expected ; that so all Obstacles to our *Moral Sense*, and our *kind Affections*, from false Views of *Interest*, may be removed. See p. 251 of the *Inquiry*.

PHILARETUS wants to know if this *Moral Sense* of something amiable in Benevolence be *Right* and *Reasonable*, or *fit* and *justifiable*. If by these Words he means, whe-

ther the Actions which this Sense at any time makes him *approve*, shall be *always approved* as *Morally Good* by him? The Author tells him, that this *Moral Sense* and our *Benevolent Affections* do make us pursue Publick Good as the End, find our greatest Pleasure in such Pursuits, and approve of all Benevolent Actions in others; but then the Author also in many Places recommends the most serious Application of our *Reason*, to enquire into the *natural Tendencies* of our Actions, as the *Means* to attain this End, that we may not be led by every *slight Appearance* of *particular Good*, to do Actions which may have *prepollent evil Consequences*. And this Inadvertence he makes one great Source of *Immoral Actions*, which both we ourselves and all others will condemn, when we observe the prepollent evil Consequences which the Agent might have foreseen. See Art. 8, 9, 10, of the third Section, and p. 250, and the whole fourth Section. If he means, "Will this *Sense* lead me to my own greatest Happiness, to a constant Self-Approbation, and engage the Favour of the Deity, if my Actions be conformable to this Sense, according to the best Knowledge of the natural Tendencies of my Actions?" The Author partly proves this, and partly refers to other Writers for what was not to his present Design, p. 251. Our *Moral Sense* and *Affections* determine our End, but *Reason* must find out the *Means*.

PHILARETUS thinks, that this Sense

not a proper *Rule*. The Author recommends to Moralists, to examine also into the State of Humane Affairs, to know what Course of Action will be most effectual to promote Publick Good, the End which our *kind Affections* and *Moral Sense* encline us to pursue, p. 253. And if a further Rule be necessary, it must come from *Revelation*.

PHILARETUS fears, that “ *this Bottom is too uncertain to set out upon, amidst the Storms of our Passions and Self-Interests.*” The Author suggests, that we have Benevolent Passions as well as Selfish; and recommends it to Moralists to explain, as he partly does himself, how all our *Selfish Affections* would conspire, if we understood our own *true Interest*, to persuade us to the same Actions which Benevolence excites us to, and our Moral Sense determines us to approve. And the Author of the *Inquiry* frequently suggests, that in the present State of Humane Nature, many other additional Motives to the Study of Publick Good are very necessary, besides our *Moral Sense* and *kind Affections*. These Motives or *Reasons* for pursuing *Publick Good*, and *preferring* it to Private, which he hints at, are such as some way or other may prove, that the *Pursuit of Publick Good* does most effectually promote the *truest Interest* of the Agent, either as the Pursuit of *Publick Good* is acceptable to the Deity, and will be rewarded by him; or as this *Pursuit* gives the Agent pleasant Reflections upon his own Conduct; or, as it en-

gages the Love, Esteem, and mutual good Offices of Mankind; and is withal generally consistent with the *highest* and *truest* Enjoyment of other *Pleasures*, nay, is the very Spirit and Life of the most of our Pleasures: Whereas a *contrary Temper* has all the *contrary pernicious Effects*. We have a Perception of *moral Good and Evil*, of something *amiable or hateful* in Actions, antecedently to any of these *Reasons*; and yet the Author of the *Inquiry* knows no other *Reasons* for *virtuous Actions*; and hence he concludes, that our first Ideas arise from a *Sense*. All Action is designed for some *End*; if the End be *reasonable*, and the Action, with all its Consequences, *naturally apt* to attain it, the Action is *Reasonable*: The *End* must be either the Good of the Agent, or of the *Publick*, or both consistently with each other. PHILARETUS owns, that Actions are *reasonable, fit, right, &c.* without regard to the Interest of the Agent: They are *reasonable* then with regard to *Publick Interests*. Now for what Reason *should* the Publick Interest be regarded? What means that *should*? Is it, that *this Regard to the Publick is the Interest of the Agent*? or *that it will be rewarded by the Deity*? — No: It is *fit* antecedently — *Fit!* for what End? for Publick Good or Private Good? Publick Good, to be sure: Because, *that the Advantage of the Whole should take place, is fit*. Again, *fit!* for what End? — Not for Private, but Publick Good. — Why should I in my Actions regard Publick

Good?

Good? — For what Reason? — Why, it is *fit* for Publick Good that I should do so. In this Circle we must run, until we acknowledge the first Original of our moral Ideas to be from a *Sense*; or, which is to the same purpose, till we acknowledge that they arise from a *Determination by the Author of Nature, which necessitates our Minds to approve of Publick Affections, and of consulting the Good of others*: And then we have room enough for our *Reason* to direct us in that Tenour of Action, which shall produce the greatest and most extensive Good in our Power, and to confirm our Publick Spirit by Motives of *Self-Interest*, and to prove it to be *reasonable* in that Sense. I mistake PHILARETUS very much, from his Letter, if his Zeal for the *Reasonableness* of Virtue does not flow from a lively *Moral Sense* and very *Noble Affections*:

*And am his, and your
most obedient, obliged, Servant,
PHILANTHROPUS.*

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,
WHEN I read PHILANTHROPUS's Letter in the *Journals* of the 12th and the 19th of *June*, I was mighty glad to meet with a Person of his Ingenuity and Candour,

dour, so willing and so able to examine my Sentiments of Things. And as I conceive no small Hopes, by his Means, to be either convinced that I am yet in the wrong, or to be more fully satisfied that I am in the right, by hearing all that he has to say against my Opinion; I shall beg the favour of you, if you judge it proper, to convey these Speculations to Him, by publishing them to the World.

I ENTIRELY agree with him as to the Method he proposes in arguing on these Subjects, *viz.* to *examine* into the Meaning of the *Words used in our Discourses of Morality*. And therefore, I will immediately define what I mean by the Words which PHILANTHROPUS mentions, *viz.* *Reasonable, Fit, Right, Just, Conformable to Truth*; that we may see whether they stand for the same Ideas with *him*, that they do with *me*; and that if they do not, we may agree what *Ideas* they shall stand for.

By *Reason*, I understand, strictly speaking, that Method of Thinking, whereby the Mind discovers such *Truths* as are not *Self Evident*, by the Intervention of *Self-evident Truths*; and such *Truths* as are *less evident*, by such as are already supposed to be *more so*. The Perception of *Evident Truths*, is *Knowledge*; which is therefore acquired and improved by Reasoning, *i. e.* by connecting remote or less evident *Truths* with *self evident* or *more evident* ones. All *Propositions* which we perceive as *True*, whether immediately, or by the Means
of

of other intermediate Perceptions, we call *Truths*. They are all, strictly speaking, *Speculative*; i. e. they are seen and perceived by the Mind. But when such *Truths* are Relative to the *Actions* of rational Agents, they are in common Usage stil'd *Practical Truths*. And *they* are always the *Conclusions* made from Those, which, by way of Distinction are call'd *Speculative Truths*. *Speculative Truths* are not themselves Rules of Action, but only the *Practical Truths* (or *Conclusions*) drawn from them. The Instance which PHILANTHRO-PUS gives of *Practical Truth*, according to these Definitions, seems rather to belong to *Speculative Truth*. For the *discovering what Objects are naturally apt to give any Person the highest Gratifications, or what Means are most effectual to obtain such Objects*, is discovering the same *Species of Truth* with the *Relations of Quantities, or of any other Objects among themselves, both speculative Truths, or Theorems*. But the inferring from thence in what Manner *Persons* are *obliged* to act towards such Objects, or what Means they are *obliged* to employ, in order to obtain them, would be the discovering *Practical Truths* properly so call'd. *Reasonable*, signifies the Result of employing *Reason*. *Thinking* according to this Result, is called *Thinking Reasonably*: And *Acting* according to it, *Acting Reasonably*. Sometimes indeed the Word *Reason* is used to signify the *Faculty of Reasoning*, or of employing *Reason*. But this is in

a less proper and strict Sense. When again the Word *Reason* is used to denote a Collection of Propositions already known to be true, it is likewise improperly and figuratively used, and means no more than *Reasonable*, or the Result of *Reasoning*.

Now I think it will plainly follow from this Definition of the Word *Reasonable*, if it be a right one, that the *Reasonableness* of the *Ends* of *Moral Agents* does not depend on their Conformity to the *Natural Affections* of the Agent, nor to a *Moral Sense* representing such *Ends* as *amiable* to him; but singly on their Conformity to *Reason*. *Reason* would always represent the *End* in the same Manner to the *Rational Agent*, whatever his *Affections*, or *Inward Sense* of *Amiableness*, were. And, supposing a Being framed so as to have only *selfish Affections*, and yet to be endued with a Faculty of *Reasoning*; such a Being, if he employs that Faculty, must see it to be highly *unreasonable* that his private Interest or Pleasure should take Place to the Destruction of the Interest or Pleasure of all other Beings like *himself*; tho' for want of *kind Affections*, he would be void of any Collateral Disposition to act in that Manner, which to his Understanding must necessarily appear *Reasonable*. Nay, such a Being would perceive his *Natural Affections* to be very *unreasonable Affections*. I do not believe indeed he could possibly have a *Sense* of *Amiableness* in a Conduct agreeable to such *Affections*; because it

seems

seems absurd that any thing should appear *Amiable* to a rational Creature which so evidently contradicted *Reason*. But if he could be supposed to have such a *Sense*, it would be a *Sense* as *unreasonable* as his *Affections* were. And neither of them, nor both together, could possibly render a Conduct pursuant to them *Reasonable*.

THAT which perhaps may be apt to mislead us in this Point is, That we find in Fact it is always *Reasonable* to act according to *Natural Affection*, and the *Moral Sense*. And thence we may too hastily conclude, that such a Conduct is *Reasonable*, for this Reason, because our *Natural Affections* and *Moral Sense* move us to it. But, if we examine more closely, I believe we shall find the Reverse to be the Truth, *viz.* That we deem our *Affections* and our *Moral Sense* to be *Reasonable Affections*, and a *Reasonable Sense*, from their prompting us to the same Conduct which *Reason* approves and directs. And thus *Reason* is the Measure of the *Goodness* or *Badness* of our *Affections*, and *Moral Sense*, and consequently of the Actions flowing from them, and not *vice versa*.

PHILANTHROPUS acknowledges that every Man would say that *Benevolence*, or a *Study of Publick Good*, is absolutely *Reasonable* to any possible Mind. But he thinks they would say so, only because all Mankind have a *Moral Sense* and *Publick Affections*. And

he thinks they would not say so, if they had not; but would be *indifferent*.

I AGREE with him, that they would be *Indifferent* as to any *Affection* they would feel towards others, disposing them to do or to wish them any Good. But they would not, they could not, be *Indifferent* as to perceiving it *Reasonable* that the *Publick Good* should be preferred to *Private Good*; and consequently, that it was in itself *Reasonable* that every *Rational Agent* should study the *Publick Good*. They would not only see the *Speculative Truth*, That an equal *Intenseness* of *Pleasure* enjoyed by *Twenty* was a greater *Sum* of *Happiness*, than if it were enjoyed only by *One*. But they would likewise see this *Practical Truth* to be the *Consequence* of it, "That it was therefore *Reasonable* that the
 " *Happiness* of the *Twenty* should be con-
 " sidered preferably by all *Rational Agents* to
 " the *Happiness* of the *One*, where all things
 " else were supposed equal, and there were
 " no peculiar *Circumstances* to justify a Di-
 " stinction."

AND it is from this Perception of the *Reasonableness* of regarding the *Happiness* of *Many* more than the *Happiness* of a *Few*, that we discern and admire the *Wisdom* of our *Maker*, in implanting *Social* and *Publick Affections* in his *Creatures*, to be subservient to this *wise* and *reasonable* End. Whereas, if we had not this previous *Apprehension* of *Reasonableness*, antecedent to, and independent

on, any *Affections*, or *Sense* of them, we could not judge it to be more *wise* or *reasonable* to have bestowed such *social Affections* on Men, than to have given them only *selfish Affections*, prompting them to take care of themselves alone, without any respect to the *Cruelty of the Means*, or the *bad Influence on a Community*. In short, without such a previous Apprehension of what is *Reasonable* in itself, all conceivable Constitutions of Creatures would have been equally *wise*; which is evidently absurd.

REASONABLE therefore, when said of *Actions*, or of the *Ends* of *Rational Agents*, denotes the Agreeableness of those *Actions*, and those *Ends*, not to the *Natural Affections* of such *Agents*, nor to a *Moral Sense* rendering the Compliance with those *Affections* amiable; but to *Reason* only. And those *Affections*, as well as that *Moral Sense*, are themselves denominated *Reasonable*, when they move us to such *Actions*, or *Ends*, as *Reason* prescribes to us, and direct us to; and must be stiled *Unreasonable*, if they diverted us from *them*, or disposed us to the contrary.

THE next Word, FIT, is a relative Word, expressing the relation of Means to an End. And therefore an *absolute antecedent Fitness in the Nature of Things*, meaning thereby *Antecedent* to any *End*, either existing, or in Supposition, is absolute Nonsense. But when Moralists speak of *Antecedent Fitness*, they mean only *Antecedent* to the actual Constitution

tion of Things, and *Fit* upon Supposition of certain Circumstances existing, which perhaps may never really exist. As for instance; if never any Creatures had been produced, it would nevertheless have been always *Antecedently true*, that, if they should ever be so and so constituted, it would be *Fit* that they should act towards one another in such and such a manner. For, upon Supposition that the perfectly wise and good Author of Nature should produce any Rational Agents, it was always *Antecedently Fit* that they should use the best *Means* to *Happiness*, since their Happiness must be the chief *End* for which the wise and good Author would bring them into Being. And, further, supposing they should be framed with *Natural Affections* leading to this *End*, it was likewise *Antecedently Fit* that they should exercise those *Affections*, and follow *their* Motions; not barely because they are supposed to have such *Affections*, (for that Consideration alone discovers no *End*, and consequently no *Fitness*) but because they are supposed to have such *Affections* leading to such an *End*. It is not *Fit* that they should perform such Offices, barely because they have such *Affections*. But, because it was *Antecedently Fit*, that they should perform such Offices, it was likewise *Fit* that they should be endued with such *Affections*. And, for the same Reason, it was *Fit* that they should exert those *Affections* when they have them.

THIS

THIS Explanation of the Word *Fit* may easily clear up that seeming Circle which PHILANTHROPOS observes in arguing upon this Proposition, "It is *Fit* that the Advant-
 "tage of the Whole should take place." *Fit*,
 says he, *for what End?* — *Not for Pri-
 vate, but Publick Good.* Now indeed to ar-
 gue that it is *Fit* for *Publick Good*, that *Pub-
 lick Good* should take place, is arguing in a
 Circle, and proving nothing. But, if we con-
 sider that, when we say, "It is *Fit* that *Pub-
 lick Good* should be regarded," the *End* to
 which the *Fitness* there relates is not *Publick
 Good* considered barely in itself; but the wise
 and good *End* of the Creator, to render all
 his Creatures as happy as their Constitution
 will admit of: Then it will be no Circle, to
 argue that the Regard of *Publick Good* is a
Fit Means for obtaining this wise and good
End of the Creator. If the Question be,
*Why should I in my Actions regard Publick
 Good?* — The proper and first Answer is,
 "Because it is the *Fit Means* of obtaining
 "the *Publick Good*, that every constituent
 "Member of that *Publick* should regard it."
 But if it be further demanded — *Why
 ought the Publick Good to be sought after?* —
 Then the right Answer is, — "Because it
 "is *Fit* for the accomplishing the wise *End*
 "of our Creator, to make all his Creatures
 "Happy, that it should be so." And if it be
 further urged — "Why is that *End* to be
 "re-

“ regarded ? ” The Answer is — “ Because it
 “ is a *wise* and *reasonable* End.”

INDEED the *Fitness* of *Means* to an *End* lays no Obligation, but as the *End* is *Reasonable*. And therefore when Moralists say that any Thing is *Antecedently Fit*, they always suppose the *End* to be *Reasonable*. *Means* may be very *apt* to promote a *very unreasonable* *End*. But, in a Moral Sense of the Word, such *Means* would never be said to be *Fit*, and far less to constitute such an *Antecedent Fitness* as Moralists speak of in their Writings. I will trouble you with what remains, next Week ; and am,

Tours, &c

PHILARETUS.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,

THE next to be considered is the Word **T** RIGHT, which denotes nothing more in effect than *Reasonable* ; only taking it for granted that *Reason* represents to us the Nature of Things truly as it is.

THE Word JUST denotes only *Right* applied specially to what we owe to other Persons. And therefore, what has been said of the Word *Reasonable*, may be applied to these Words *Right* and *Just*.

THE Expression AGREEABLE TO TRUTH, when used with respect to Actions, is to the
 same

same Effect with *Agreeable to Reason*. For,
 tho' *Truth*, meaning thereby such Propositions
 as express the Nature of Things as it is,
 is the real Foundation of all *Moral Good* or
Evil; yet, as this *Truth* must be apprehended
 by the *Agent*, before it can be a *Rule* for his
 Actions, so *Truth* considered as a Rule to act
 by, *i. e.* *Moral Truth*, is the same with *Reason*,
 or what *Reason* dictates. And *Acting Agreeably*
to Truth, can mean no more than
 Acting agreeably to our *Knowledge* of it, *i. e.*
 to *Reason*; for *Reason* leads us to that *Know-*
ledge. *Reason* informs us how Things are,
 as far as it goes. And if we treat Things not
 as our *Reason* tells us they *are*, but as our
Reason tells us they *are not*, we act contrary
 to our *Apprehension* of *Truth*, or to *Moral*
Truth; and, acting therein perversely, be-
 come *morally Evil* Agents: Whereas, if we
 act the Reverse, we are denominated *morally*
Good Agents. Acting contrary to our *Natural*
Affections does not immediately render us *mo-*
really evil Agents, nor acting agreeably to
 them *morally good* Agents; because our *Affec-*
tions do not of themselves immediately inform
 us how things *are*, or *are not*. But, medi-
 ately, the acting agreeably or disagreeably to
 them, may denominate us *morally Good* or
morally Evil, as those *Affections* are Indica-
 tions of the Will and Design of our Creator;
 and as the acting in Opposition to his Will, is
 acting as if he had not been our Benefactor,
 and as if we owed him no Return of Grati-
 tude

tude and Obedience. And, further, the thwarting our *Natural Affections* may constitute us *morally Evil* Agents, as being in effect the denying that we have such *Affections*, by acting as if we had them not. And, in this Case, the *moral Evil* will consist in acting contrary to this *Truth*, That we have such *Affections*. But still all this supposes these *Affections* to be *Good, Right, Reasonable Affections*. For, if they are not so, then the thwarting them will not render us *evil*, but *good Agents*. For in that case, *Reason* would be a much surer Indication of the Will and Design of our Creator, than the *Affections* can be: And the acting as if we had not *Natural Evil Affections* would render us *morally good Agents*.

BUT, as such a Supposition of *Natural Evil Affections* can only be put for Argument's Sake, and can never really exist; it being impossible that a wise and good Being should give his Creatures a *Natural Bias* to *Evil*; the Conclusions from *Reason*, and from *Natural Affection* duly examined, will always be the same: For the *Natural Affections*, and the *Moral Sense* attending them, are so ordered by the Author of Nature, that they coincide with the Dictates of *Reason*. And therefore, whatever follows from the Consideration of *their Movements*, will likewise follow from a due Attention to the Discoveries of *Truth* which our *Reason* will open to us. The only Difference is, that the *One* is a sufficient Principle to argue from; the *Other* is not. For,

when,

when, in the Regress of the Analysis, as I may call it, we arrive at *Natural Affections*, or a *moral Sense* accompanying them, and take them for our ultimate Principle; we do not feel sufficient Satisfaction to make any demonstrative Conclusion from them: Whereas, when we go back to *Reason* in our Investigation, *i. e.* when we resolve the Propositions into *self-evident* or *evident Truths*, then we find no further Doubt in our Mind, but meet with a *Principle* which we cannot but acquiesce in. In one Case, we still leave our *Principle* to be proved. In the other, we reach a Principle, which is self-evident, or certainly demonstrable. When we have observed certain *Natural Affections* in our selves, the Question still remains, whether these Natural Affections are *Good* or *Evil*, *Right* or *Wrong*, *i. e.* agreeable to *Reason*, or disagreeable to it, which requires further Proof to determine it: But when we rest our Foot upon such *Truths* as are evident or demonstrated, we leave nothing unproved; but arrive at as much Certainty as we are capable of, and can go no farther.

THUS I have examined all the *Terms* which PHILANTHROPUS proposes. And, as I understand them, they would lead me to look upon *Reason* as That which alone discovers and delivers to us the *proper* Rule and Measure of *Action*; as That which lays the *proper*, and indeed, strictly speaking, the *only Obligation* upon us to act in a certain manner; since we are always self-condemned, whenever we

contradict its Conclusions and Directions. And, as for all those *natural Affections*, whether *Social* or *Selfish*, which the Author of our Nature has interwoven in our Frame, all the consequent *Relishes* and *Tastes* which he has endued us with; they are indeed additional Motives to Right Acting, as they render our Duty pleasant and comfortable to us, and the contrary displeasing and comfortless; they render us the more inexcusable in departing from the *Rules of Reason*, since they were given us to promote the Observance of them: But they can never fix upon us any *proper* and *strict Obligation*, farther than as they are made Objects of *Reason*, and furnish us with Topicks to *reason* from, and are found to agree with *Reason*.

AND, I believe, if we consider the Matter closely, we shall find that we cannot so much as form an Idea of *Obligation*, without introducing *Reason* as its Foundation. Supposing we have *Natural Affections* disposing us to certain *Actions*, how are we *obliged* to comply with such *Dispositions*? — Why — because it is *Reasonable* to do so. Have we a *Moral Sense*, or *Relish*, for such *Actions* and *Dispositions*? How are we *obliged* to gratify that *Relish*? Why — it is *Reasonable* to gratify it. How are we at all *obliged* to consult our own *Interest* or *Pleasure*? Are we not at Liberty to give up that *Interest* or *Pleasure*? — No — it is *Unreasonable* to do it — we are self-condemned if we do it in such and such

Cases. And therefore, we are *obliged* in such Cases *not* to do it. In short, all sort of *Obligation* to any thing, implies some *Reason* to give it Force, without which it is a mere Phantom of the Imagination.

PHILANTHROPUS thinks, I have not *happened to observe the Author of the Inquiry's Definition of the Moral Sense, p. 124, and that I have by this means misapprehended him in something.* If I have, I shall be extremely glad to be set right. But I think I have all along understood him to mean by his *Moral Sense*, as he defines it, *A Determination of our Minds to receive AMIABLE or DISAGREEABLE Ideas of Actions, when they occur to our Observation, antecedently to any Opinions of Advantage or Loss to redound to ourselves from them.* That there is such a *Sense* implanted in us by the Author of our Nature, I make no Question. I believe every one may feel it in himself, And when I asked, *whence this Sense arose?* I did not mean to express any Doubt about its Existence; but only to signify the Necessity of enquiring into the Original of it, in order to determine whether it was a *Right Sense*, or not; by which I meant, whether it prompted us to *Right Actions*, or to judge *Rightly* of *Actions*, or not; and whether the *Actions*, or *Agents*, in which it delighted, or to which it was averse, were really *Morally Good* or *Morally Evil* in themselves: The *Test* of which Inquiry, I took to be *Reason*; and that this *Sense* was

was *Good* or *Bad*, *Right* or *Wrong*, as it *agreed* or *disagreed* with *Reason*; and not *Reason*, as it *agreed* or *disagreed* with this *Sense*. AS TO PHILANTHROPUS'S Admonition against squeezing too much Meaning into some *short Words and Particles*, by which means the crowded Sense often passes almost unobserved in the Sentence, I think it very just; and have endeavoured to avoid that Fault in Writing this, as much as I could.

I am perswaded that PHILANTHROPUS is no more an Enemy to the *Reasonableness* of *Virtue*, than I am to the *Amiability* of it. But the Question at present is, "From what Principle *Moral Obligation* is to be deduced; and what it is that immediately denominates *Actions*, and *Agents*, *Morally Good*, or *Morally Evil*." In which Inquiry I shall always be glad of, as I shall be ever ready to receive, further Information from so ingenious a Writer as PHILANTHROPUS.

I am, S I R,

His and Your obliged

humble Servant,

PHILARETUS.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,

AFTER hearty Thanks to PHILARETUS for engaging me in a further Enquiry into the Foundation of *Virtue*, please to communi-

municate to him these Thoughts on his Letters of *July* and *August* 7.

OUR Debate is drawn into narrower Bounds, by his reducing ultimately all other *Moral Attributes* of Actions to *Reasonableness* or *Conformity to Truth*. I allow his Definitions; nor do I apprehend he would have disallowed my Instance of *Practical Truth*, had he defined the Word *Obligation*.

THE *Reasonableness* of an Action, or its *Conformity to Truth*, or the *Power of finding out Truth*, I fancy needs further Explication. *True Propositions* may be made concerning all Objects, Good or Evil; there must be a *Conformity* between every true Proposition and its Object: If then all Conformity between an Object and a *Truth*, be *Goodness*, all Objects must be good. If there be any particular Kind of Conformity which constitutes *Moral Goodness*, I wish it were explained, and distinguished from that *Conformity* between every Object of our Knowledge and the *Truths* which we know.

IN every *Truth* some *Attribute* is affirmed or denied of its *Subject*. In *Truths* about Actions some *Attribute* is affirmed or denied of Actions. Whatever *Attribute* is affirmed of any Action, the contrary *Attribute* may be as *truly* affirmed of the contrary Action or Omission: Both these Propositions shall be true, and their Objects, *viz.* the *Actions*, shall be conformable to them. If then this *Conformity* be *Moral Goodness*, the most contrary Actions shall both

both be Good, being both conformable to their several *Truths*: This *Conformity* then cannot denominate the One Good more than the Other. It must be some other *Attribute*, which can be ascribed to one, and not to the other, which must make the Distinction, and not *the agreeing with a Truth*; for any one may make as many Truths about Villany as about Heroism, by ascribing to it the contrary *Attributes*.

BUT not to pass over this Debate with a *Logical* or *Metaphysical* Argument. When we ask the *Reason* of an Action, we sometimes mean *the Truth which excites the Agent to it, by shewing that it is apt to gratify some Inclination of his Mind*. Thus, Why does a sensual Man pursue Wealth? The *Reason*, in this Meaning of the Word, is this *Truth*, viz. Wealth is useful to purchase Pleasures. At other Times, by the *Reason* of Actions we mean, *the Truth which shews a Quality in the Action of any Person, engaging the Approbation either of the Agent or the Spectator; or which shews it to be Morally Good*. Thus why do I observe the Contracts I have made? The Reason is this, "Mutual Observation of Contracts is necessary to preserve Society." The former *Reasons*, after GROTIUS, I call *exciting Reasons*, the latter *justifying Reasons*.

NOW PHILARETUS seems to me to maintain, "That there is some *Exciting Reason* to *Virtue*, antecedent to all kind *Affections*,

" or

or *Instinct* toward the Good of Others :
 “ And that in like Manner there are some *justifying Reasons*, or Truths, antecedent to
 “ any *Moral Sense*, causing Approbation.”
 The Author of the *Inquiry*, I apprehend, must
 maintain, “ that *Desires, Affections, Instincts*,
 “ must be previous to all *Exciting Reasons* ;
 “ and a *Moral Sense* antecedent to all *Justi-*
 “ *fying Reasons.*”

THE *Exciting Reasons* are such as shew an
 Action to be fit to attain its *End* : But no-
 thing can be an *End* previous to all *Desires*,
Affections, or *Instincts*, determining us to pur-
 sue it : They must then be previous to all *Ex-*
citing Reasons or *Truths*, unless we say that
 there may be *Exciting Reasons* to Actions,
 where no *End* is intended ; or that *Ends* are
 intended previously to all *Desire* or *Affection*.

BUT are there not *Exciting Reasons* even
 antecedent to any *End*, moving us to propose
 one *End* rather than another ? To this ARI-
 STOTLE long ago answered, That there are
Ultimate Ends, not desired with a view to
 any thing further ; and *Subordinate Ends*, de-
 sired with a view to something further. There
 are *Exciting Reasons*, or *Truths*, about sub-
 ordinate Ends, shewing their Tendency to-
 ward the *Ultimate End* ; but as to the *Ulti-*
mate Ends, there is no Truth or Reason ex-
 citing us to pursue them. Were there *Ex-*
citing Reasons for all Ends, there could be no
Ultimate End ; but we should desire One
 H thing

thing for the Sake of Another in an infinite Series.

THUS, ask a Being who has *selfish Affections*, why he pursues Wealth? He will assign this Truth as his *Exciting Reason*, "that Wealth furnishes Pleasures or Happiness." Ask again, why he desires his own Happiness or Pleasure? I cannot divine what Proposition he would assign as the *Reason* moving him to it. This is indeed a true Proposition, "There is a Quality in his Nature moving him to pursue Happiness;" but it is this *Quality* or *Instinct* in his Nature which moves him, and not this Proposition. Just so this is a Truth, "that a Certain Medicine cures an Ague;" but it is not a Proposition which cures the Ague, nor is it any Reflection or Knowledge of our own Nature which excites us to pursue Happiness.

IF this Being have also *publick Affections*; what are the *Exciting Reasons* for observing Faith, or hazarding his Life in War? He will assign this Truth as a Reason, "Such Conduct tends to the Good of Mankind." Go a Step further, Why does he pursue the Good of Mankind? If his *Affections* be really disinterested, without any selfish View, he has no *Exciting Reason*; the Publick Good is an ultimate End to this Series of Desires.

WHEN PHILARETUS, to evade a Circle, brings in the End of the *Deity*, as a Reason of pursuing publick Good; if he means an *exciting Reason*, let him express the Truth exciting Men to pursue the End proposed by the *Deity*.

Deity. Is it this, "No Creature can be Happy who Counteracts it?" This is a Reason of Self-Love exciting all who consider it. But again, what Reason excites Men to pursue their own Happiness? Here we must end in an Instinct. Is this the Truth, "The *Deity* is my Benefactor?" I ask again the Reason exciting to love or obey Benefactors? Here again we must land in an Instinct. Is this the *Truth*, "The End of the *Deity* is a Reasonable End?" I ask again, What is the *Truth*, a Conformity to which makes the Desire of Publick Good reasonable in the *Deity*? What Truth either excites or justifies the *Deity* in this Desire? As soon as I hear a pertinent Proposition of this Kind, I shall recant all I have said. If the *Exciting Reason* of Men's complying with the *Deity* be this Truth, "Men are *obliged* to comply, or it is their Duty;" Then we are excited because we are obliged, or bound in Duty; and not because it is Reasonable so to do, or because it is conformable to a Truth. For this also is a Truth, "Disobedience is contrary to Obligation;" yet no body imagines that Conformity to this Truth, either makes Disobedience *Morally* Good, or excites to Pursue it. But whoever will define the Words, *Oblige*, *Owe*, *Duty*, will find himself at as great a Loss for ultimate *exciting Reasons*, previous to *Affections*, as ever.

IN like Manner, where he says, "that to a Being void of *Publick Affections*, the pursuing the Happiness of Twenty, rather than his

own, is *Reasonable* ;” I want to know the Truth exciting such a Nature to Pursue it. Sure it is not this, that “ the Sum of Twenty Felicities is a greater Quantity than any One of them.” For unless by a *Publick Affection* the Happiness of others be made desirable to him, the Prospect of a great Sum in the Possession of others will never excite him ; more than the Knowledge of this Truth, “ That One Hundred equal Stones are a greater Bulk than One,” will excite a Man, who has no Desire of Heaps, to cast them together.

IF PHILARETUS intended in these two last Cases *Justifying Reasons*, then it leads to the next Part of our Debate, about *Justifying Reasons* : The true Way of deciding it, is not a frequent Assertion, “ that we approve Actions antecedently to a *Sense* ;” but producing the very *Truths* for Conformity to which we approve Actions ultimately. Here the former Argument might be repeated, “ that we may form *true Propositions* concerning all sorts of Actions Good or Evil : Each sort of Action is conformable to the Truths formed concerning it ; this *Conformity* then cannot distinguish *Good Actions* from *Evil*. But to pass this Argument.

PHILARETUS owns, that “ *Truths* which only shew an Action to be fit to attain its *End*, do not justify it.” The *Justifying Truths* must be about the Ends themselves. Now what are the *Justifying Truths* about Ultimate Ends ? What is the Truth, for Conformity to which

we approve the Desire of Publick Good as an End, or call it a *Reasonable End*? Is it this, "Publick Good is a reasonable End?" This amounts to a very trifling Argument, *viz.* It is reasonable because it is reasonable. Is it this one; "This Desire excites to Actions which really do promote Publick Happiness?" Then, for Conformity to what *Truth* do Men approve the promoting of Publick Happiness? Is it this *Truth*, "Publick Happiness includes that of the Agent?" This is only an exciting Reason to Self-Love. Is this the *Justifying Truth*, "Publick Happiness is the End of the *Deity*?" The Question returns, What *Truth* justifies Concurrence with the Divine Ends? Is it this, "The *Deity* is our Benefactor?" Then what *Truth* justifies Concurrence with *Benefactors*? Here we must end in a *Sense*. Or shall we assign this Reason, "Concurrence with the Divine Ends is morally good, because those Ends are *Reasonable Ends*?" Then what is the *Reason* or *Truth*, for Conformity to which we call the Divine Ends *Reasonable*? They are not good or conformable to Reason, because he wills them to be so. Here I own, I must ultimately resolve all *Approbation* into a *Moral Sense*, as I was forced to resolve all *Exciting Reasons* into *Instincts*.

PHILARETUS often insinuates two Objections; 1st. "There must be some *antecedent Standard*, by which we judge the *Affections* or *Moral Senses* themselves to be *right* or *wrong*." As to *Affections*, we judge of them

them ultimately by the *Moral Sense*, according as they are kind or malicious. But as to the *Moral Sense* itself, it can no more be called morally *Good* or *Evil*, than we call the Sense of Tasting, *sweet* or *bitter*. Each Person judges the *Sense* of others by his own: But no Man can immediately judge of his own *Moral Sense*, or Sense of Tasting, whether they be right or wrong. Reason may shew Men, that their *Moral Sense*, as it is now constituted, tends to make the Species *Happy*; and that a *contrary Sense* would have been pernicious; and therefore we may, by a Metonymie, call it *happy*, as we call our Taste *Healthy*, when it leads us to delight in Objects tending to our Health.

THE other Objection is this, that if there is no *Moral Standard* antecedent to a *Sense*, then all *Constitutions of Senses* had been alike *Good and Reasonable* in the *Deity*." To this it may be answered, that we can conceive no *exciting Reasons* of the Divine Actions, antecedent to something in the *Divine Nature*, of a nobler Kind, corresponding to our Kindness and sweetest Affections; by which the *Deity* desires universal Happiness as an *End*. The Divine Wisdom did, no doubt, suggest the implanting of such a Sense in Men, to be the fittest Means of obtaining this End. The Justifying Reasons of the Divine Actions, when we judge of them, must end in our *Moral Sense*, which makes us approve such a kind beneficent Constitution of our Nature. Had we

wanted a *Moral Sense*, yet the *Deity* might have judged of his own Actions as he does now ; but we should have had no Moral Ideas, either concerning the *Deity*, or our selves. Our Reason might have suggested indeed, that if the *Deity* did study our Happiness as an End, the omitting to give us such a Sense, if we could have had an Idea of it, was omitting the proper Means for obtaining his End. But *Moral Good* or *Evil* would have been to us unknown.

*I am his and your
very humble Servant,
PHILANTHROPUS.*

TO *BRITANNICUS*.

S I R,

IF you are not already tired with this Debate your self, I would by your Means presume once more on PHILANTHROPUS's Patience ; and beg you to convey these Thoughts to him, in Answer to his last Letter of *Oct. 9.*

HE observes rightly, that the Argument is *drawn into narrower Bounds* ; and seems willing to put the Issue of the Whole upon this single Question, " Whether, or no, there are "*Reasons* previous to all *Desires*, *Affections*, "*Instincts*, or any *Moral Sense* arising from "*them* ? "

THE Question then is, ' Whether *Truth*, apprehended by our *Reason*, is the Principle
' from

‘ from which we must argue to prove any
 ‘ thing to be *morally Good* or *Evil*; or whe-
 ‘ ther our *Desires*, *Affections*, *Instincts*, and
 ‘ a *moral Sense* attending them, distinct from
 ‘ the Faculty of *Reason*, compose that Prin-
 ‘ ciple?’

PHILANTHROPUS thinks, *Truth* cannot be the Principle; because “ we may form *True Propositions* concerning all Sorts of Actions, *Good* and *Evil*; and each Sort of Action is conformable to the *Truths* formed concerning it: And therefore this Conformity cannot distinguish *Good* Actions from *Evil*. — But, upon this Principle, all Objects must be *Good*. — And the most contrary Actions shall be both *Good*.” This is the Substance of his *Logical* or *Metaphysical Argument*.

BUT he, by a great Mistake here, puts the Conformity, or *agreeing with a Truth*, i. e. any one single Truth; for the *Conformity with Truth*, as *Truth* signifies the true State and Connexion and Relation of Things, taken all together. For, when it is said that *Moral Goodness* consists in the Acting in *Conformity to Truth*; the Meaning is not, that it consists in a Conformity to any one single and detached *True Proposition*, but to the whole Chain and *Compages* of *Truth*; in acting agreeably to the State and Connexion and mutual Relation of Things.

FOR instance, tho’ it is a *True Proposition*,
 ‘ That such an Action gives me Pleasure;’ yet

it may not be a *morally good* Action, because it may contradict and interfere with other *Truths*; as, 'That, tho' it pleases *me*, it hurts *another*;' and, 'That the Nature of that other requires Pleasure as well as mine;' or, 'That, tho' it gratifies me for the present, it may probably be followed by Pain afterwards;' and the like: And because it may be contradictory to the Nature and Constitution of Things, which is the Chain and Series of *Truth*.

BUT, not to dwell longer on this *Logical* or *Metaphysical* Objection, (which is entirely founded upon his mistaking the sole Idea which is annexed to the Word *Truth* in this *Question*;) I shall proceed to examine his *Moral* Objections.

PHILANTHROPUS divides *Reasons* for Actions, after GROTIUS, into two Sorts; *Exciting Reasons*, and *Justifying Reasons*. And I am willing to follow him in this Partition: Tho', in Truth, the *Exciting Reason* to an Action, and the *Justifying Reason* for it, ought always to be the same in Substance, and should only differ in the Form of putting them. The *Exciting Reason* should amount to this, in order to be a valid Reason; 'This Action is *Right*, therefore I will do it;' and the *Justifying Reason*, 'It was *Right*, therefore I did *right* in doing it.'

BUT the Dispute is, what Method we are to take to prove that *This Action is*, or *was*, *Right*.

I

Now

Now this I would prove from its Conformity to the Nature and Constitution of Things, about which I form in my Mind certain *True Propositions*; and thence call it *Truth*. And in this Disquisition I would take into Consideration my own Nature; the Nature of Things without me; and my Relation to *them*, and *theirs* to me. And under this Head all natural *Desires, Affections, Passions, Appetites, Instincts, Relishes* and *Senses*, both in myself and others, come to be examined, as Indications of the Condition and End of Nature. And when, from all these Considerations, I find certain *True Propositions* resulting, concerning the Nature of Things; then *Moral Goodness*, I say, consists in acting agreeably to those *True Propositions*, and *Moral Badness* in acting disagreeably to them.

BUT PHILANTHROPUS thinks this Point may be proved singly from the *Ends* which our *Desires and Affections* propose to us; and from a *Moral Sense*, or Taste, approving of what is agreeable to *them*: Wherein I think he wants ground to rest upon. He esteems *That* to be the whole Proof, which seems to me but a Branch of the Reasoning; and the Quarry whence we are to fetch some of the Materials which help us in examining those Propositions which are the Foundations of our Rules for acting.

HE proceeds to sustain his own, and overturn the contrary Opinion, by this Principle, 'That there can be no *exciting Reason* to an

' *Ulti*

Ultimate End? In which I agree with him and ARISTOTLE: * But the very Point in Question is, 'What is, or ought to be, the *Ultimate End* of Actions.' And the greatest part of *Moral Goodness* consists in chusing a right *Ultimate End*. He who proposes his *Pleasure* as his *Ultimate End*, can scarce be a very good Man: Whereas he who makes *Truth* his *Ultimate End*, can scarce be a bad Man. He acts like a rational Creature, and does not desire or wish that *Truth* may lie on *this* side or *that* side of the Question; but studiously and sincerely pursues it whithersoever it leads him.

THE Question is not, what is seen in Experience to lead Men to act. I confess, their *Passions* and *Affections* generally do lead them. And it is their Happiness, and the Wisdom of their Creator, that they have such *Affections* and *Passions* as naturally tend, till they corrupt them, to produce in many Instances the same Effects, which *Reason* both dictates before, and approves afterwards. But still 'tis *Reason* alone which informs us beforehand that such Actions *would be* Right, as well as afterwards that such Actions *were* Right. And of this indeed I think there can be no doubt to any one who has ever felt *Reason* working in his Breast.

PHILANTHROPUS observes, that *to avoid the Circle I bring in the End of the Deity*. But

I must remind him that this was only under the Definition of the Word *FIT*; which being a *Relative* Word, respecting some End or other, must have a *Correlative* answering it: Whereas the Words *True*, *Reasonable*, *Right*, are *Absolute* and not *Relative Terms*, and therefore need no *Correlate*. Now I said, if we form this Proposition, 'It is *Fit* that *Publick Good* should be regarded,' it must be *Fit* for the attaining some *End*. And this *Fitness* is a *Moral Fitness*, and *Right* in it self, if the *End* be a *wise and reasonable End*. I mentioned the *Deity*, not as meaning that this *End* was *wise* because it was the *End* of the *Deity*; but because all *Ends* must subsist in some *Intelligent Agent*; and the *Deity* is an *Intelligent Agent* who is perfectly wise, and always proposes *wise Ends* to himself.

PHILANTHROPOS proceeds to ask "What is the Truth *exciting* Men to pursue the End proposed by the Deity?" And he offers me my Choice of several *Truths*, which tho' they are all very weighty Truths, yet are not those I should chuse to build upon in the Argument. The single *Truth* I would pitch upon is, 'Because the *End* is a *reasonable End*. And the *Truth*, which makes this *End*, (viz. Publick Good or Happiness) a *Reasonable End* is, 'That it is best, that all should be happy.' This is the "*Truth*, a Conformity to which makes the Desire of Publick Good reasonable in the Deity;" and, I add, in all rational Creatures, who would imitate the Wisdom and Goodness of the *Deity*.

IF any one asks, Why it is *Best*? I would answer him, as I would do, if he asked me, Why Four is more than Two? It is self-evident. I should be sorry indeed to argue, as PHILANTHROPUS afterwards puts it, "That *Publick Good* is a reasonable End, because " it is a reasonable End." I should think it sufficient to prove it to be *Best*, and should not be afraid of affirming it to be *reasonable* to pursue what is *Best*. The only Point is to prove what is *Best*. And this can only be done, by considering and examining by *Reason*, not feeling by *Instinct* or *Sense*, how the Matter of Fact stands, and what is actually *Best* in it self. Just as when I am examining, whether I ought to assent to a Proposition; I would not say, It is True, because it is True: but would consider the Evidence of it; and if I perceived it to be True, would assent to it.

THE self-evident *Truth* then, " That it is " in it self *Best* that All should be Happy," is immediately perceivable by all rational Natures. But the Question of Fact, wherein that *Best* consists, makes the Difference of *more or less Moral Goodness* in *Intelligent Agents*, according to the greater or narrower Extent of their Knowledge; considered together with their Disposition to act, and, in Fact, acting agreeably to their Knowledge; and also using the Means to acquire and improve that Knowledge. In this the All-knowing Author of Nature, being infallible and unchangeable, *He* is most perfectly *Good* in a *Moral Sense*. Inferior

ferior Beings are, *more* or *less*, capable of being so, proportionably to their Capacity of Knowledge: And are, in Fact, *morally Good* or *Evil*, as they act according to, or contrary to, that Knowledge which they are possess'd of, or may acquire.

BUT that which I fancy misleads PHILANTHROPIST in this Point is, that by *Exciting*, he means, exciting as the *Passions* and *Affections* do, by giving us Uneasiness when we do not follow their Movements; (which is indeed a Guard to our Virtue, but not the Ground of it:) Whereas by *Reason's exciting*, I mean only its proposing an Action to us as most *eligible* and *right*; which, tho' it may be attended with Pleasure or Uneasiness from an additional *Moral Sense*, yet is distinct from it, and not dependent upon it. And on the same ground he often confounds a Thing's being *desireable* to us, with its being esteemed *reasonable* by us: Whereas Men often *desire* what they think, and are conscious, is very *unreasonable*; and know That to be very *reasonable*, which they by no Means *desire*. For which I appeal to the common Experience of Mankind.

WHAT I have said about *exciting Reasons*, may be easily applied to all that PHILANTHROPIST demands, concerning *justifying Reasons*; and therefore I need not consume the Time in doing it; nor mistrust the Judgment of my Readers so far. But I may possibly say more on this Head, if ever I come to examine

PHILANTHROPUS's Answers to the *two Objections*, which he says I often insinuate.

I SHALL conclude at present, with giving my Meaning of the Word *Obligation*, since PHILANTHROPUS desires it more than once; tho' I thought I had in Effect done it in my last.

OBLIGATION is a Word of a *Latin* Original, signifying *the Action of Binding*; which therefore, in a *Moral Sense*, (for the Question here is not about corporal Force) must import the *Binding* an Intelligent Agent by some Law; which can be no other than that of *Reason*. For all other Ties are reducible to this; and this is Primary, and reducible to no other Principle. I find I can thwart my *Desires* and *Affections*, and yet approve what I do in contradiction to them. I can approve of Actions by a *Moral Sense*; and yet, upon Examination by Reason, rectify that *Sense*, as I can my *external Senses*; and condemn what it approved. But my *Reason* I can never contradict, but it flies in my Face; I stand self-condemned, and bring my self in guilty, tho' all the Earth should acquit me. And I never heartily comply with its Dictates, but I acquit my self, tho' all the World should condemn me. And I do not find, that *Desire*, or *Affection*, or *Passion*, or any kind of *Sensation*, has any Influence in the Case; except it be, to increase or diminish Pleasure and Self-complacency, as we comply with, or reject the Dictates of *Reason*, and are thereby a kind of
natural

natural Rewards and Punishments; or, perhaps, to extenuate our Guilt, and excuse us in some Degree, on the Strength and Violence of the Temptation. I am,

S I R, Yours, &c.

PHILARETUS.

TO BRITANNICUS.

S I R,

IWOULD fain, methinks, clear the Account I have, in several former Letters, given of the *Basis* and *Groundwork* of True Virtue, from all seeming and plausible Difficulties: And therefore, I now beg Leave to conclude, by examining the Answers which PHILANTHROPUS gives to the *Two Objections*, he says, *I often insinuate.*

THE *First* Objection is, “ That there must
“ be a Standard to judge of the *Affections* and
“ *Moral Senses* themselves, whether they are
“ *Right* or *Wrong.*”

TO this PHILANTHROPUS returns for Answer, That “ we judge of the *Affections*
“ by the *Moral Sense.* But, as to the *Moral*
“ *Sense* it self, it can no more be called *morally*
“ *Good* or *Evil*, than we call the Sense
“ of *Tasting*, Sweet or Bitter. — No Man
“ can immediately judge of his own Moral
“ Sense, or Sense of *Tasting*, whether they
“ be *Right* or *Wrong.*”

Now, the Question is not, whether the *moral Sense* can be called *morally Good* or *Evil*,

evil, which I admit it cannot, properly and
 strictly speaking; because *moral Good* and *E-*
vil belong to *Agents*, and their *Actions*, not
 to *Affections* or *Inclinations*. For the Person
 chooses; and his Action arises from his own
 Choice: And therefore *He* is accountable. But
 his *Affection*, or *Inclination*, or *Sense*, is im-
 planted in him, and not in his own Power:
 And therefore he is not accountable either for
 having it, or for wanting it; and consequent-
 ly it has nothing *moral* in it; since *Morality*
 implies the being accountable and answerable;
 and cannot take Place where Force is used, or
 Power is wanting. A Man is no more a *mo-*
rally good Man for being made *affectionate*,
 than for being made hungry when his Stomach
 is craving. But, as Hunger prompts us to eat
 when the Machine requires Repair, where per-
 haps *Reason* might forget or neglect it, were
 it left to itself; so *natural Affection*, and the
Sentiments belonging to it, urge us to render
 good Offices to others, which our Reason,
 tho' it approves them, and even proposes them
 to our Thoughts as the best Things we can do,
 yet might be too slack and remiss in stirring
 us to perform them, without such indefatiga-
 ble Sollicitors continually prompting us. But
 still the doing such good Offices is a *morally*
good Action; not because *Affection*, or *Senti-*
ment, inclines us so, (for then Cruelty, in Case
 a cruel *Affection*, or *Sentiment*, was natural to
 us, would be *morally good* too;) but because
 our Mind perceives it to be *Best* to do so;

perceiving immediately, and intuitively, this Truth; "That it is best that the Species should be happy;" and deducing this further Truth by Reason, "That Benevolence is the properest and fittest Means to procure the Happiness of the Species."

BUT the true Question is, "Whether the *moral Sense* may be called *Right* or *Wrong* or not:" For we grant it cannot be properly called *morally Good* or *Evil*. And this is certainly may, as well as any other Sense. It is not parallel to the calling the Sense of Tasting, *sweet* or *bitter*; as PHILANTHROPEUS has wrongly put it, and in doing so directly begs the Question. For *sweet* and *bitter* are on all Hands allowed to be Denominations of particular distinct Sensations: Whereas we deny that *moral Good* and *Evil* are at all Denominations of *Sensations*, but of *Dispositions* and *Actions* of Agents: But it is exactly parallel to the calling the Sense of Tasting *Right* or *Wrong*.

NOW this we certainly may do, and in fact very frequently do, in *this* and all other *Senses* internal as well as external. We judge any *Sense* to be wrong, or vitiated, when it represents Things otherwise than we know it would do, if we were in a right State of Body. And even in our best State, our *Senses* often deceive us; and are, or may be, rectified by our *Reason*. A Truth so well known to all natural Philosophers, that I need not spend Time in proving it. In the same manner the *Moral*

Sense must be esteemed wrong, or vitiated, where it contradicts our Reason, in which the Health and Vigour of the Mind consists. If all Men were naturally selfish, and ill-natured to others ; and by any *internal Sense* found Delight in reflecting on Actions conformable to such a malign *Affection* ; still all Men endued with *Reason*, and employing their *Reason* in examining such Things, must perceive it to be a *wrong Sense* that relished such Actions ; a Sense which represented Things very differently from what they really were. And it would be as ill Reasoning to conclude, from such a vitiated *internal Sense*, the *Moral Goodness* or *Badness* of an Action, as it would be to conclude the true *Taste* or *Colour* of a Body, (that is, what Sensation of *Tasting* or *Seeing* it would give us in a right Habit of Body) from the *Taste* or *Colour* which a Fever or a Jaundice makes it put upon us. But, as in the *External Senses* our *Reason* must be the Test to inform us whether they are perfect in their kind, or defective and vitiated ; so it is likewise in the *Internal Senses*. And without this Standard of *Reason* to recur to, all *Senses* would be equally *Right*, merely because they were *Senses* ; which we know is contrary to fact.

BUT I think PHILANTHROPUS here gives the Point up in effect himself. For he admits that *Reason* may shew Men, that their moral *Sense*, as it is now constituted, tends to make the *Species* happy ; and that a contrary *Sense*

would have been pernicious. Why — if this be allowed, we have the greatest *Truth* we wanted, and the most complex, and difficult to be demonstrated. And one *Truth* more, and that a self-evident *One*, will afford us a solid Bottom, on which the whole Structure of Morality may safely rest. And that is, “ That it is better that the Species should be Happy, than that it should not.” This is such an unmoveable *Truth*, that it will bear all the Weight we can lay upon it. And, consequently, whatever Actions, or Dispositions of the Mind, are the proper Means to this *End*, (*viz.* to obtain the Happiness of the Species,) are in themselves evidently *morally Good*, being agreeable to this self-evident Truth, “ That it is *best* that the Species should be Happy.” And, if we find in our selves *Affections*, or Sentiments, leading to this End, we judge them to be *Right Affections*, tho’ I would not chuse to stile them *morally Good*. And for *vice versa*,

BUT, if it be farther asked, “ Why it is *best* that the Species should be happy?” I own no Reason can be assigned for it; no more than a Reason can be assigned, “ why the Whole is equal to all its Parts,” or “ a Part is less than the Whole;” or “ Things equal to the same Third, are equal to one another.” No Reason can be ever given for a self-evident Axiom: For all Reasoning is only an Appeal to some self-evident Principle or other. And if I could find a Man of so different a Mak-

of Understanding from mine, that what was self-evident to me was not so to him, I should have no Medium by which I could argue with him any longer on that Head; but we must part, and own that we cannot understand each other: Only in that case we should not be angry at one another, for what neither of us could help.

AGAIN, if it be farther demanded, "For whom is it *best*, that the Species should be happy?" I answer; For themselves, and for every one who has any Thing to do with them, and who is capable of perceiving, "That *Happiness is better than Misery*"; and of seeing this Consequence, "That therefore, He does for the *better* who promotes *Happiness* any where, than He who promotes *Misery*." And this, I should think, every Intelligent Being must perceive, if he applies his Mind to it at all.

THE other *Objection* PHILANTHROPUS takes notice that *I insinuate* is. "That if there is no *moral Standard* antecedent to a *Sense*, then all Constitution of Senses had been alike good and reasonable in the Deity:" I meant, *for the Deity to appoint and cause*.

To this he answers; "That we can conceive no *exciting Reasons* of the Divine Actions, antecedent to something in the *Divine Nature*, of a nobler kind, corresponding to our Kindness and sweetest Affections; by which the *Deity* desires universal Happiness as an *End* — The *justifying Reasons*"

“ *sons* of the Divine Actions must end in our
 “ *moral Sense*, which makes us approve such
 “ a kind beneficent Constitution of our Na-
 “ ture.”

BUT I would here ask PHILANTHRO-
 PUS, by what kind of Reasoning it is, that
 we attribute *Benignity* to the *Deity*? Is it on-
 ly because we find *benign Affections* in our
 selves? If so; then, on the same Ground, we
 may attribute Pain and Uneasiness to *Him*, be-
 cause we sometimes feel them; or any other
imperfect Sentiment, which is familiar to *us*.
 But the Truth is, we conclude, that the *Deity*
 cannot but be *benign*; because, by some *previ-
 ous Standard* in our own Minds, we judge *Benig-
 nity* to be a Perfection; something in itself Right
 and Excellent; and therefore cannot be want-
 ing where there is infinite Perfection. And
 this brings us back to the Inquiry; “ How,
 “ and by what Standard, we are to judge of
 “ our *Affections* and *Senses*?” Which was ful-
 ly considered under the *former Objection*, and
 needs not be repeated here. So that we go
 much higher in our Enquiry than the bare
 Consideration of *Affection*, or a *moral Sense*
 in our selves. I own, indeed, we cannot but
 conceive something in the *Deity*, in some
 measure analagous to our kindest *Affections*;
 as that he takes infinite Pleasure in communi-
 cating Good to his Creatures. But this Con-
 sideration by it self would only lead us to con-
 clude him infinitely *Happy*, and not *Good* in
 a moral Sense. We esteem him essentially

Good

Good, because he knows all *Truth*, and always acts according to it. He infallibly knows what is *Best*; and will always do what is *Best* upon the whole, all things considered. For Instance, his infinite Knowledge represents to him *Happiness*, as something that is *better* than *Misery*. And thence we firmly conclude, that he will always propose the *Happiness*, and not the *Misery*, of his Creatures, as his *End* in creating them. And, if he creates them with a Capacity for *Happiness*, he will not make it impossible for them to be *Happy*: Tho' perhaps it may be in the Nature of Things impossible to make them capable of the *Happiness* of Intelligent and Free Agents, without leaving it in their own Power to make themselves *Miserable* if they will; which will therefore still be *best*, to put in their own Election, tho' the Consequence may be evil to them thro' their own perverse Choice.

AND I think here PHILANTHROPUS again gives up the Cause; when he admits that *our Reason might have suggested, that if the Deity did study our Happiness as an End, the omitting to give us such a Sense, if we could have had an Idea of it, was omitting the proper Means for obtaining his End.*

THEN surely there can be no doubt, that the *Deity* intended us to be *Happy* when he created us: Nor can we suppose that he intends us to be *Happy*, and yet with-holds from us the necessary Means of *Happiness*. For the not doing the one would be acting contrary to

to what He knows to be *best*: And the other would be acting contrary to his own Design. Neither of which can find Place in an Intelligent, Free, and Perfect Being.

So that upon the whole, I think, these *Objections* have not been answered by PHILANTHROPUS. And indeed, they seem to me *such* as cannot be removed, and must entirely overturn his Notions of *moral Good* and *Evil*.

BUT I cannot part with PHILANTHROPUS, till I assure him once more, that I think the Treatise of the *Original of Virtue*, which gave occasion to this Debate, as well as the other concerning *Beauty* and *Order*, exceedingly ingenious, and well argued from the Principles laid down. And if the Author had laid his Principles deeper, he would have made his Discourse as useful and solid, as it is delightful and entertaining. And I should not esteem my Labour lost, if by what I have said I could provoke him to undertake the Proof of the Rectitude and Excellence, as well as of the Existence, of his *Moral Sense*. — I am fully perswaded he would be much more capable of deducing that Series of Truths, which is necessary to the compassing such a Design, than,

Tour, &c.

PHILARETUS.

POST.



POSTSCRIPT

Concerning the Meaning, and different Acceptations of the Words GOOD and EVIL.



HERE having been frequent Occasion in the foregoing Papers, to mention the Words MORAL GOOD and MORAL EVIL, it may not be thought improper to subjoin something here, by Way of further Inquiry into the original and strict Meaning of the Words GOOD and EVIL, and how the derived Senses of those Words are formed from the Original Ones; that so we may the more readily attend to the true Importance of them, when they are applied to Moral Subjects.

IF this Inquiry is pursued, with regard to any one of these Words, it will be sufficient; because, they signifying direct opposite Ideas, whatever is affirmed of the One is to be denied of the Other.

I SHALL therefore confine my self to the Word GOOD, as the most eligible to describe. And what shall be said of GOOD, will be easily applicable, by reversing it, to EVIL; provided the Reader proceed cautiously in applying it.

By *GOOD*, when taken in the *primary* and *proper* Sense of the Word, we denote the Idea of some *Perfection* or *Excellence* of *Nature*; which commonly goes by the Name of *Physical Goodness*. When the *Nature* of the Thing which we say is *Good*, is *absolutely* or *infinitely Perfect*, in every Sense; then it constitutes *Absolute* or *Infinite Goodness*, or *Goodness* in the highest Sense, and utmost Extent, of the Word. When the *Nature* is *limited*, and consequently not *absolutely Perfect* every Way; then, if the Thing we speak of be at all *Good*, it constitutes *Respective Goodness*, or *Goodness* according to the Measure and Limits of that *Nature*, supposed always to have some Degree of *Goodness* in it. And a Thing is said to be more or less *Good*, or its *Respective Goodness* to be greater or less, as it is thought to approach nearer to, or to keep a greater Distance from, *Absolute Goodness*, still supposing it to have some *positive Goodness*: Or, by comparing it with some other *respectively Good* Thing, and finding the Difference of its *Respective Goodness*, *i. e.* the Excess or Deficiency of it. These Operations are both performed by the Mind, when it considers *One* Thing as *better* or *worse* than, or as *Good* as, *Another*. Whatever, likewise, is the Result, or proper Consequence of *Good*, is *Good* in this *primary* Sense. And if *Good* is ever the Occasion of *Evil*, it is by Accident, and from some other extrinsick Cause; which

which will not interfere with the foregoing self-evident Proposition.

FROM this *primary* and *strict* Sense of *Good*, we deduce a *Secondary* and *Relative* Sense. Thus, when the *Constitution* and *Nature* of any Thing suites it for a particular *End*, we say it is *Good*; meaning *relatively* to that *End*. And it is called *Better* or *Worse*, in this *Relative* Sense, as it answers that *End* more or less perfectly. In this Sense an *Eye* or *Ear* is said to be *Good* to *see* or *hear* with: a *House* is *Good* to *dwell* in, &c,

BUT then, unless the *End* to be served be a *good* *End* in the primary Sense of *Good*, the Thing which serves that *End* is not *Good* in that primary Sense, tho' it be called *Good* relatively; which Word, in that Case, means no more than *Useful* or *apt* for that Purpose. Thus *Meat* is not *Good* in the strict Sense, tho' it please the *Taste*, if the Consequence of eating it be *Sickness* or *Pain*; tho', in the common Speech, what pleases the *Taste* is said to be *Good*, i. e. *Good* relatively to the *Taste*.

ANOTHER *Relative* Sense of *Good* is, when any Thing is said to answer one particular *Relation*. And here, That may be *relatively Good*, which is *not Good* in the *primary* Sense: As, an *Ill-Man* may be a *Good Scholar*, or *Workman*. And what is *relative-Good* may, at the same Time, be *relatively Bad*: As a *Good Father* may be a *Bad Friend*, or *Subject*, &c. Whereas that which is *Good* in the primary Sense can never be

Bad in the primary Sense. Therefore, before *Relative Goodness* can coincide with *Primary Goodness*, it must be *Goodness* with Respect to all the *Relations* in which the Thing stands, or *universal Relative Goodness*.

A THIRD *Relative* Sense of *Goodness* is when it denotes the Aptness of any Thing to give us *Pleasure*. We call such a Thing *Good* *i. e. relatively Good* for us. But still a Thing may be *Good* for us, in this *Relative* Sense and yet be far from being *Good* in it self. As if the causing undeserved Misery to others or the committing any Crime, should be Source of *Pleasure* to us, or to any other Person.

THEREFORE what causes *Pleasure*, tho' it be always *relatively Good*, is yet never *Good* in the *primary* Sense, unless that *Pleasure* be the Result of a *Good Nature*, or of *Acting* agreeably to that *Nature*.

WHEN *Pleasure* is the Result of Perception, Intelligence, Power, Rectitude of Nature inclining us to use our Power according to our Intelligence, join'd with a Consciousness of *Willing* and *Acting* so; then *Pleasure* is the Result of a *Good Nature*, and a *Good Manner* of *Acting*; and consequently, that which procures it is *Good* in the *Primary*, as well as in the *Relative* Sense of the Word.

BUT where *Pleasure* is the Result of Perception, and Power, with a wrong Apprehension of Things; or with a right Apprehension and a wrong and perverse Nature inclining

will and act contrary to that Apprehension; or with a right Apprehension, and a rightly disposed Nature, and yet at the same Time a Consciousness of *Willing* and *Acting* in a Manner contrary to that Intelligence and Rectitude of Nature: In all these Cases, I say, it is evidently the Result of an *Evil Nature*, or *Evil Manner of Acting*; and consequently, cannot be *Good* in the *primary* Sense of *Good*, tho' it is still *Good* relatively, *i. e.* it is *Good* to us.

HENCE, by-the-by, we may collect, that God, who is the Author of nothing but what is *Good* in the *primary* Sense, will never annex *Pleasure* upon the whole to an *Evil Nature*, nor to the *Acting* contrary to a *Good Nature*; and therefore, that *Moral Goodness* must upon the whole be attended with *Happiness*, and *Moral Badness* cannot. I speak not of particular incidental Pleasures and Pains, which limited and imperfect Creatures may enjoy or suffer contrary to this Rule, for wise Reasons, and perhaps for their greater *Good* upon the Whole; but of *Happiness*, which is the Excess of their whole *Pleasures* above their whole *Pains*.

WHEN the Word *Good* Means *Goodly* or *Beautiful*, it is taken in this last *Relative* Sense. For by *Beauty* we understand no more, than what occasions *Pleasure* by the Contemplation of it. There is no need at present of inquiring into the other Metaphorical Senses of the Word. What has been said will be sufficient

sufficient to explain the Importance of this Term *Good*, when applied to *Moral Subjects*.

HAVING thus far enquired into the different Acceptations of the Word *GOOD*; it is easy to deduce from thence the Analogy they all bear to the Original and Primary Sense.

THE *Relative Goodness*, or Aptness for an End, is properly enough stiled *Goodness*; because it is a Degree of *Perfection* and *Excellence* of Nature, to answer the End which the Nature of the Thing suites it for: Tho' to render it strictly, and upon the Whole, *Good*, the *End* must be likewise a *Good End*.

AGAIN, The *Relative Goodness* of answering any one *Relation* is, so far as that *Relation* reaches, *Good* in the proper Sense: Tho' it is but *Partial Goodness*, unless all the *Relations* are at the same Time answered.

LASTLY, The *Relative Goodness* of what affords *Pleasure*, is properly termed *Good* in one View, as being the Result of something, which, in it self, and considered alone, is *Good*, viz. *Perception* and *Power*: Tho' this *Pleasure* is *Evil* in another View, as it arises from a Mixture of *Evil Ingredients*, viz. a perverse Understanding, a wrong Nature, or an incongruous Manner of Acting; and as *Perception* and *Power*, in Conjunction with those *Evil Properties*, are themselves corrupted and rendered *Evil*; or, rather, the *Being*, who perceives and has *Power*, without right Intelligence, and right Nature, is an *Evil Being*.

FROM

FROM all that has been said, it will appear, what is understood by MORAL GOODNESS.

IT is plain, *Moral Goodness* means the *Goodness* of a *Moral Person*, i. e. of an *Intelligent Agent*.

Now, as *Agency* implies *Freedom*, i. e. a Power to act, it is evident an *Agent* is a *Good Agent*, when he employs this Power *well*; and employing Power *well*, is the employing it agreeably to a *Good Nature*. And the Associating the Ideas of *Intelligence*, and of a *Propensity* to act according to Intelligence, gives us the complex Idea of a *Good Nature*. It follows, that to employ Power, or exert Freedom, agreeably to *Intelligence*, and to the *Propensity* of *Nature* to act according to it, is employing Power *well*, and consequently being a *Good Agent*. And, because *Intelligence* is always supposed to be *Right Intelligence*, or the *Intelligence* of *Truth*; and further, because it cannot be conceived that an *Intelligent Being* should in his *Nature* be *propense* to act contrary to his *Intelligence*; therefore it is said, that *Moral Goodness* consists in *Acting* agreeably to *Truth*.

MORAL Goodness depends on the Power of the *Agent*; since by withdrawing or not exerting that Power he ceases to be a *Good Agent*, were his *Intelligence* and *natural Disposition* never so Good. And, on the other Hand, *Moral Goodness* supposes a *Good Nature*, i. e. *Intelligence* and Rectitude of natural

tural Disposition; because, without these the *Agent* cannot act well. No one can do what he knows not how to do; nor can be expected to do what he is no ways disposed to do.

IF there was no such Thing as *Liberty*, or *Agency*, the Distinction of *Moral* and *Physical* Good would be a mere Distinction of Words without any Difference in the Things. If there was no *Physical Good*, then *Moral Good* would be an impossible Idea, having no Ground to rest upon. For it would be frivolous to say an *Agent* is *Good*, if we had no Idea of *Good*.

WHEN we say, an *Agent* employs his Power well, if we mean only, that he employs it so as to produce a good Effect; this imports no Goodness of Agency, but only the *Physical Goodness* of the Cause and Effect: which is the same, whether the Cause be supposed to act in the strict Sense of the Word, or only to be acted upon, i. e. to be an *Instrumental Cause*; which, in strict Speech, is no proper Cause at all, but only an Effect serving as an *Instrument* to work another Effect.

BUT if, when we say an *Agent* employs his Power well, we preserve the Idea of Agency, and speak accurately; we then mean, that the *Agent* intends and desires to produce a good Effect, and acts agreeably to that Intention and Inclination. But he cannot intend it, without Intelligence, i. e. without knowing what is a good Effect; and will not de-

re it, unless his Nature *disposes* him to *act* agreeably to his *Intelligence*. And *Intelligence*, and an *Inclination* to *act* intelligently, are evidently *Physically Good* Qualities, or *Perfections* of *Nature*. Consequently, an *Intelligent* Nature, *disposed* to *act* intelligently, is *Good Nature* in the *physical* and *primary* sense. It follows, that an *Agent*, who employs his *Power well*, is an *Agent* who employs his *Power* agreeably to such a *Good Nature*. And the *Idea* of such an *Agent* is the *Idea* of a *Moral Good* Person.

GOODNESS, when applied to *Agents*, bears the same *Primary*, and *Relative* Senses, which bears when applied to any other Subject. The *primary* Sense of *Moral Goodness* implies the *Absolute* or *Respective Perfection* of *Agency*. The *Relative* Senses of *Moral Goodness*, imply the *Perfection* of *Agency*, with regard to the *Relations* in which the *Agent* stands.

AND *Moral Goodness* in the *Relative* Sense, must be *Relative* with Respect to all the *Relations* in which the *Agent* stands, before it can coincide with *Moral Goodness* in the *primary* and *strict* Sense of the Word.

THERE is a particularly *Relative* Sense of *Good*, which, tho' it falls under the foregoing definitions, yet deserves to be considered apart, as being the most common Acceptation of the Word. It is, when the Word is applied with regard to the Communication of *Good* from one *Agent* to another.

M

GOOD.

GOODNESS in this Respect bears sometimes a *Physical*, and sometimes a *Moral* Sense.

WHEN it carries a *Physical* Sense, it is termed *Benignity*: Which is *Physical Goodness*, as it is a high *Perfection* of *Nature*. And it appears to be a *Perfection* of *Nature*; because it is the Result of *Intelligence*, which perceives *Good* as *Good*, and *Evil* as *Evil*; and of *Propensity* or *Disposition* of *Nature* to act agreeably to that *Intelligence*; which Properties are in themselves *Perfections* of *Nature*. And whatever is the Result of a *Perfection* of *Nature*, is a *Perfection* of *Nature* it self. Only it must be observed, that this *Relative Goodness*, in order to fall in with *primary Goodness*, must be *Relative* to all, not *partial*; not *Goodness* to some, and *Evil* to others; must be *Goodness* to the whole. And the General Term of *Goodness* is appropriated to *Benignity*, as *Benignity* is one of the noblest and most exalted *Perfections* that can denominate any *Nature Good* in the *primary* Sense of the Word.

WHEN the Word *Goodness*, in this respect of Communicating *Good* to others, carries a *Moral* Sense, it means the *Acting* agreeably to this *natural Benignity*: And is then still called *Benevolence*; which, when it takes effect, is called *Beneficence*. This *Benevolence* goes by the Name of *Goodness*, i. e. *Moral Goodness*, because it is the *Goodness* of an *Agent* as such acting agreeably to a *Good*, which is in this Case a *Benign Nature*. And this Branch of *Moral*

al Goodness has the General Title of *Goodness*, as it bears a Moral Sense, conferred upon it; because it is justly placed in the Foremost Rank of *Moral Excellency*, and is seldom found to stand alone.

I SHALL only further examine in what sense the Word *Good* is applied to the *Affections* of the Mind.

THE *Affections* are proper to those *Agents* to whom a certain System of Matter is annexed; which they *direct* within certain Limits, and which again *influences* them to a certain Degree; not so indeed as to take away their *Agency*, but so as to *affect* their *Inclination* or *Desire* to *act*. These *Influences* are sometimes distinguished into *Appetites*, *Passions*, *Affections*; and sometimes go under the general Denomination of *Affections*. They are considered as something different from the *Propensity*, which must be conceived in every *Intelligent Agent* to *act* agreeably to his *Intelligence*; and arise from our particular Constitution and Frame of Soul and Body. We find by Experience that the *Consciousness* of some *Actions*, over and above the immediate *Uneasiness* it gives the *Mind*, creates such a *Disturbance* and *Disorder* in the *material System* to which we are joined, as reflects back a further *Pain* and *Uneasiness* to the *Mind*, *i. e.* to the *Intelligent Agent*. And, on the other-hand, the *Consciousness* of other *Actions* gives such a *kindly Motion* to the parts of the *ma-*

terial System, as returns to the *Mind* a *pleasing* and *grateful Sensation*.

Now when these *Affections* are said to be *Good*, it is always in the *Physical*, never in the *Moral* Sense; because they are not in our *Power*, and do not depend on our *Choice* or *Will*. They are *relatively Good* in this *Physical* Sense, as far as they afford us *Pleasure*. But still, if that *Pleasure* be the *Result* of *Evil*, the *Affections* will not be *Good* in the *primary* and *proper* Sense; tho' they will be still *Good to us*, as far as they serve to encrease our *Happiness*.

A G A I N, these *Affections* are *relatively Good* with respect to the *End* they are adapted to. This *End* is, to *deter* us from some *Actions*, and to *prompt* us to others; by encreasing the *Pleasure* or *Pain* of being conscious of such *Actions*.

A N D the *Affections* are *apt* and *proper* Instruments to serve this *End*. But still we cannot determine that these *Affections* are *Good* in the *primary* Sense, till we have examined the *End* they are subservient to, and have found it to be a *Good End*, in the *primary* Sense of *Good*. That is, till we have by some other *Test* tried whether the *Actions* they *prompt* us to are in themselves *Good Actions*, and those they *deter* us from are *Evil ones*. This *Test* is to use the *True Nature of Things*, as far as it may be perceived and understood by our *Intelligence*. It follows, that only our *Intelligence* can inform us when these *Affections* are *Good*.

plea in the strict and proper Sense : And we can never infer it from the *Sensations* which the *Affections* themselves give us ; nor, consequently, from any *Internal* or *Moral Sense*, which is only the *Result* of those *Sensations*.

I SAID these *Affections* are peculiar to *Intelligent Agents*, united to a *System of Matter*, as their *Organ* and *Sensorium*. For the Supreme Being, who is of an *absolutely perfect Nature* ; who sees every Instant whatever is every where *True* ; and is by the Necessity of his Nature always *disposed* to use his *Power* agreeably to his *Intelligence*, *i. e.* to *act* wisely ; and who is infinitely *Happy* from the Result of those *Perfections* of his *Nature*, and of his *Consciousness* of always *Acting* in Conformity to them ; stands in need of no such Assistance from *Affections* to redouble his *Happiness*, and thereby to augment his *Disposition* to do *Right*, as he has made us to want, and has therefore afforded us. And as he does not stand in Need of such Assistance, so neither could he Possibly receive it ; being of a perfectly *Independent Nature* ; whom therefore nothing from without can *influence* or *act* upon.

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